WitnessKit 3 God and Religions Class 5 Effects of Postmodernism on The USA and on American Religion

### A Verse to Remember:

Romans 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

(We renew our minds through reading God's word regularly—and God cares about our minds.)

### John 8:31b-32

Jesus said, "If You abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

## Who are the people who influence society who are *most likely* to be Postmodernists?

The answer is "the New Class" of people involved in therapy, advice, or information. (Their professional training often tends toward Postmodernism.)

#### This includes

- teachers from kindergarten through graduate school,
- journalists,
- artists,
- TV producers and writers,
- □ planners,
- psychologists,
- social workers, and
- people working in government.

Their influence blankets society from early childhood onward.

## "Can a person be a Postmodernist without knowing it?"

Yes, because people learn what they are immersed in. Many well-intentioned individuals compartmentalize their lives, believing in mutually contradictory things from one area of life to another.

#### It is valuable to

- present each area of your life to God for His wisdom,
- asking Him to help you to center your thinking around His truth.

# Because Postmodernism's influence is so broad, everyone

Effects of Postmodernism

should recognize the effects of postmodernism in these areas of life:

- 1. Education
- 2. Social Policy
- 3. World geography
- 4. Terrorism
- 5. Religion

- Postmodernism <u>rejects systematic learning of</u> <u>foundational facts</u> in favor of **experiential activities.**Students draw their own conclusions.
  - Much focus is on group equality. Often individual grades are eliminated in favor of group project grades. Or grades may be eliminated altogether.
  - Advocacy of social causes often becomes the goal of education; teaching becomes highly politicized.
  - □ Facts and truths are replaced by stories, or narratives. Phonics may be left out of the mix.

- Rigorous subjects like mathematics may be modified, so that the problems do <u>not</u> have "one right answer"—such as finding the best way to arrive at an airport on time, with alternate paths and forms of transportation possible.
- Even subjects like mathematics may encourage students to <u>explore their feelings</u> about math rather than learning the multiplication tables or how to work with fractions or the binomial expansion.

- Exploring feelings about mathematics is unlikely to encourage a new generation of engineers to pursue that vital subject. Much of early mathematics is tedious, because students need to learn an extensive set of math facts, such as multiplication tables and rules for solving fraction problems.
- Students who are talented in mathematics may not be talented in arithmetic. Different sets of skills are required for different parts of the field. Feelings about arithmetic do not translate into feelings about trigonometry.

- Students may never learn the multiplication tables—but instead may learn how to punch numbers on a calculator. Math Facts are considered <u>unimportant</u> in Postmodernism.
- When those students reach Algebra I, a gateway course to *all* the technical fields, the coursework is out of reach. They can't do the arithmetic that is foundational for the mathematics.

- These approaches make the USA less competitive in the rigorous fields, and often leave our students unprepared for college.
- These early failures to teach arithmetic open our graduate schools to foreign students in preference over our own students.
- These early failures make productive fields like engineering out of reach, even for students with the natural aptitude to achieve those careers.
   Students cannot learn what they do not have available to learn.

In libraries, a postmodernist librarian may purchase books about all kinds of pagan religions and witchcraft, but will not purchase any Christian books for the library. A postmodernist librarian may choose books pursuing extremely leftwing social causes, and may throw away the classics, because looking at all sides of issues is viewed as helping oppressors, and classics are identified with oppressors of the past. Library used book sales are a great place to find quality books that are being discarded.

The bright spot in this picture is the diversity available in the education field in the USA. Private schools and homeschooling are viable options, and parents who search carefully may be able to find charter schools that are appropriate for their children. These alternatives are often designed to save the students from the educational malpractice of Postmodernism. Starting in the elementary years is preferred for the sake of phonics and arithmetic.

- It is important to understand that the Postmodernists are sure they are right, and they are sure they are the professionals whose points of view should be accepted. They honestly have very good intentions in the ideas they promote. They are not intentionally committing educational malpractice.
- Shifting worldviews cause the loss of common frames of reference. Without those, persuasion toward correcting course may not work.

It is important for parents to search out what their students are being taught. If a Postmodernist public school is the only option available, make sure your children learn phonics and arithmetic. Buy the homeschool programs that teach basic skills, and use them in addition to sending the children to school. Read with them, read to them, surround them with good books, and make time to listen to what is going on in their schooldays. Make this a priority and a habit. Stand in the educational gap for them.

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## Social Policy

- Postmodernism sees no universals in the institution of marriage. It sees marriage as oppressive to women. It encourages alternate arrangements. It views all family forms as equal, and defines family as any group of people who care about each other. It encourages temporary arrangements.
- It encourages gay marriage, gay adoption, gay foster care, and artificial insemination as a way of forming gay households with children.

## Social Policy

Postmodernism is blind to the power disparity in relationships due to gender roles. It is blind to the fact that marriage <u>levels the playing field</u> <u>for the protection of dependents</u>. Who loses in a live-in split-up? Divorce at least offers some compensatory rulings.

Marriage <u>is</u> the moral norm for families BECAUSE it offers nurturing and financial benefits for children that last a lifetime.

## Social Policy

- Postmodernism is open to the idea of shari'a law for Muslims. That means accepting the idea of polygamy, which over-rules women's rights.
- Postmodernism is closed to the idea of encouraging marriage to alleviate poverty.
- It advocates for universal daycare and preschool, failing to value the homemaking role—seeing that role as "being oppressed."
- It advocates taxing stay-at-home moms to pay for daycare for the children of working moms.

- Marriage involves some universals. The population is approximately 50-50 male-female. Polygamy reduces the availability of marriage for many males, and in the parts of the world where polygamy is practiced, laws allow terribly young ages for marriage for females—to try to make up for the disparity. The universal is one woman for one man—revealed by biology.
- All choices for marriage policy are not equivalent. Choices carry consequences.

- Biology reveals other universals—including the nurturing of infants by nursing mothers. The healthiest start implies a different role for mothers than for fathers. This biological fact underscores the need for support by the father. So marriage involves more than two people in its goals and roles. God designed marriage as a support structure for all of our good, for all of life.
- Old age helplessness is best served by a society with strong marriages, and with children who care about and for their aging parents.

- The Bible's ideals about marriage match the biological universals. That means those ideals are workable in the real world, and not just arbitrary.
- The Bible is also realistic about human hardness of heart that rejects the ideals and breaks the rules. It has advice for those situations, including the reality of divorce for 3 causes: abuse, abandonment, or adultery.

- The Bible has mechanisms for finding forgiveness when those rules have been broken, too, because God loves EVERYONE.
- But throwing out the rules that match biological facts will not work in the long term.
  - Postmodernism's approach regarding marriage will ultimately bring social deterioration. It is easier to ignore the rules in the short term, and young adults are doing so. But the long term results will be irreversible.

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The breakup of the former Soviet Union into smaller nations, and then the further breakup of those nations into smaller states, occurred partially because of the tribalism of Postmodernism. The Soviet Union used force to keep their region together, and when that force was gone, the dynamics of group identity became dominant. Postmodernism led to world approval of the break-ups within the former Yugoslavia, for instance.

- Ethnic group as identity leads to tribal separatism. Bosnians and Serbs split apart.
   Croats and Kosovars split off yet again.
   Refugees lost everything, as ethnic minorities inside newly-defined regions had to leave.
- Nationalism is viewed negatively, but cultural ethic identity is viewed positively in Postmodernism, tending to reward disunity.

- Patriotism is out of style. "Flag waving is embarrassing." Presenting yourself as primarily a member of a cultural group is positive.
   Presenting yourself as a citizen of the world is preferred to national patriotism.
- The positive contributions of cultural groups are promoted. The positive contributions of national history and the ideas of national history are ignored or treated as hypocrisy.
- Fragmentation follows.

- In a fallen world, fragmentation tends to beget violence. Instability allows warlords to attempt power grabs.
- This in turn, begets "world organization" actions. Confederacies of armies take action or send "peacekeepers."
- But historically, freedoms and human rights have been designed and implemented on a national basis, as nation-states develop constitutional principles and ideas.

- The "world organizations" are based on "least common denominators," not on representative governments that respect human rights. Every petty dictatorship has an equal vote with each democratically-organized state.
- While we watch, and we find it difficult to tell how to choose sides in some of the fragmented conflicts, the ideas that hold peace and human rights together are sent to the back of the line.

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## Terrorism—the worst thing about Postmodernism

- Since isolated tribal groups fighting for power do not have <u>national armies</u> at their disposal, and since the universal ideal of individual equality has been discarded in Postmodernism, <u>terrorism</u> can become an *approved* mode of power struggle.
- Various groups on the left have adopted terrorist tactics—many having been taught those tactics by the former Soviet Union.

- The groups that have adopted terrorism vary
- from Communist groups in South America
- to environmentalist radicals in the US
- □ to animal rights activists
- to separatist groups in Europe
- to Islamist jihadists around the world.

- Even if a group itself does not have a postmodernist belief system, the postmodernists <u>may justify the actions of the group under the banner of "fighting oppression."</u>
- Universals such as "You shall not murder" are disbelieved, so the tactics of resisting oppression have <u>no boundaries</u> in the Postmodernist mindset.

- Even the word "Terrorist" implies that moral boundaries exist around ways to fight oppression.
- Postmodernists will <u>rule out</u> use of such terms as "terrorist," or will politicize the words for political gain.
- Postmodernists use a tactic of forbidden words to force an agenda. How does "work-place violence" sound?

- Postmodernism as a theory encourages the loss of universals as boundaries for categorizing actions.
- Postmodernists may have difficulty using the word "terrorist" <u>unless</u> they are talking about conservatives <u>whom they wish to marginalize</u>.
- So we have "homegrown terrorist" means "conservative" and "workplace violence" means "jihadist."

- Thus, postmodernism can easily become an enabler of terrorism within the free nations, out of sympathy for the cause or apparent cause of the terrorists.
- (Here also we see <u>difficulty determining who is</u> a <u>potential terrorist and who is not</u>—because surface statements can appear similar in both types if the underlying belief system is not revealed. The Postmodernists like it that way—they want to <u>equalize all groups</u>.)

#### **Terrorism**

- Postmodernists are likely to react to <u>criticism of</u>
   <u>the terrorists</u> with accusations of racism or intolerance or "\_\_\_\_\_phobia" rather than realizing <u>terrorism violates universal norms</u>.
- Because postmodernism tends to be immune to facts, this reaction is difficult to overcome with persuasion. Postmodernism sees facts as mere subjectivity or power plays.

#### **Terrorism**

- Moral universals are facts. Terrorism violates moral universals. God judges based upon moral universals and God does not show partiality. Thus, Postmodernism is out of touch with the real world.
- Chaos can bring tyranny. At a time when we need the clearest possible thinking about all these issues, Postmodernism muddies the issues. It is well-intentioned, but dangerously flawed.

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#### Religion

- Postmodernism's blurring of the lines and boundaries regarding terrorism has implications for religion.
- If one religion or portion of a religion advocates violence, and "all religions are equal," then being religious is grounds for suspicion, in a postmodern world.

#### Religion

- A Postmodernist will not try to understand underlying beliefs that tend in one direction or another, a <u>factual</u> basis for categorizing religion. Rather, he will regard high degrees of ANY <u>religious feeling</u> as dangerous.
- (All religions are NOT equal, <u>based on the facts about them</u>. All individuals deserve equal rights before the law. That is a DIFFERENT matter from treating all religions as equal. Group rights and individual rights are VERY different from each other.)

#### Religion and Reality

- Our spiritual lives impact eternity, and not just for ourselves, but for everyone in our sphere of influence. Anything that adds spiritual confusion to our lives has long-term results.
- Postmodernism equates religious belief with emotional preferences. It sidesteps God's requirements for our lives, and the ultimate accountability we have before Him, for what is emotionally appealing in "equality of all religions."

#### Religions

- We can miss God's best wishes for our lives by treating His opinions as unimportant or unknowable—<u>exactly</u> the postmodernist beliefs.
- God is <u>both</u> perfect in justice <u>and</u> perfect in mercy, having taken all the suffering of the world on His own shoulders at the cross. His opinion about justice-and-mercy is eternally important.
- We are not just looking at a theory when we learn about these things. They matter for many people for all eternity.

### Postmodernism's effects on Religion have eternal consequences.

# Postmodernism's Effects on Religion

Therefore we need to understand its effects on

- 1. How the culture views religion
- 2. The path to paganism
- 3. The rejection of apologetics
- 4. The isolation of Christianity
- 5. The watering-down of the Christian message

# In a Postmodern World: How the Culture Views Religion

- Postmodernism encourages a "buffet sampler" approach to religion. A person is a web of influences from the various groups to which he belongs, and if they have different religious ideas, he is expected to sample and assimilate those he finds appealing. He is expected, if he is an educated person, to reject truth as a basis for his selection.
- Postmodernism assumes spiritual truth does not exist objectively. It is totally subjective, constructed by the groups to which he belongs.

# In a Postmodern World: How the Culture Views Religion

- Groups create religious belief. For example, a feminist (and anyone sympathetic to women) is expected by Postmodernists to reject the idea of a masculine pronoun for God.
- A vehicle for teaching this to children is the "religious play group." Churches that reject the Bible are prone toward feminist teachings in their childhood education. So parents need to visit their children's church classes.

# In a Postmodern World: How the Culture Views Religion

- Postmodernists consider a church that proclaims its beliefs on the basis of truth as intolerant and out of style.
- Religions are cultural constructs, so minorities can be religious, but mainstream people are supposed to use religion for emotional purposes ONLY, and not really BELIEVE it.

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# In a Postmodern World: The path to paganism

- If religions are to be accepted based upon emotional appeal alone, witchcraft and paganism meet those requirements—without any of those pesky <u>rules and regulations</u> about <u>right and wrong</u>. If all religions are equal, tolerance demands tolerating occult religions.
- However, this set of religions interferes with being able to tell right from wrong. All religions are NOT equal.

# In a Postmodern World: The path to paganism

- The old paganism carries with it the risk of bringing real and evil spiritual entities into a person's life. Nazi leaders moved into this religious system early in their rise to power. They went back to the old paganism of their ethnic group prior to Christianity.
- It is obvious from the palpable evil in recent world history, that turning away from the True and Living God to serve paganism brings terrible evil into the real world.

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# In a Postmodern World: The rejection of apologetics

- Apologetics—the defense of the faith—is a bridge between reason and faith.

  Postmodernism rejects reason.

  Postmodernism assumes truth is unknowable. It fails to understand the power of apologetics to bring coherence to one's worldview.
- Saving faith is faith in what is TRUE—that
   God is real and good, that God has made a way for us to find Him and to spend eternity with Him.

# In a Postmodern World: The rejection of apologetics

- Modernists need apologetics, because their skepticism is reason-based.
   Postmodernists need apologetics even more—to find their way back to reason and then to God.
- Experientially based faith without belief in truth is very shaky, and may not even be faith. Faith in Christ works only because He really did come to earth to take away our sins, and He really did rise from the dead.

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- Modernism systematically excluded Christianity from the culture. Postmodernism has intensified the exclusion of truth-based Christianity, while accepting culture-based and syncretistic Christianity.
- The exclusion has forced the churches to form parallel institutions—Christian radio stations, bookstores, activity groups. This has intensified some of the linguistic differences between Christians and the culture at large, while preserving some Christian thought.

- In the past, the culture retained a Christian vocabulary. They understood some of the major ideas of the faith. The isolation of the last 50 years has broken those linguistic ties. We are no longer understood when we speak.
- The tendency toward "sound bite" communication has made interaction between churches and the culture even more superficial.

A three-way split in the 20th century occurred among denominations - some holding firm to traditional beliefs, & some accommodating postmodern ideas about what truth is, & some blending the two approaches. The accommodators embrace postmodern ideas about group identity & subjective views of Scripture & mere experiential faith. They hold no regard for objective truth. Some denominations adopted a mix of the two, in the name of unity.

#### Here is a recent example of subjective work without regard to objective truth:

- □ From WORLD MAGAZINE April 11, 2009, "EXIT Strategies" by Jamie Dean.
- □ In 2006 the PCUSA General Assembly commended a study paper on the Trinity that suggested new language to possibly replace Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "Among the report's suggestions: 'Rainbow, Ark, and Dove, 'Sun, Light, and Burning Ray,' and 'Compassionate Mother, Beloved Child, and Life-Giving Womb."

- Notice that the language is expected to appeal emotionally to feminists.
- The church <u>does</u> need to appeal to all people, but NOT at the expense of Spiritual Reality. We cannot just arbitrarily reassign names to God, or create imagery out of thin air. God is REAL. His opinion about HIMSELF trumps our opinions. We should try not to offend Him.
- The churches which have upheld traditional views don't generally follow such trends.

- A more subtle problem is quite common, though. That problem is only reaching out to people who are emotionally led.
   Postmodernism encourages people to be emotionally led. Churches have responded by limiting their approaches to ONE approach—appeal to the emotions.
- But human beings are more complex than that.
   Emotions track beliefs about what is TRUE. So we still MUST focus on facts and truth.

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- The traditional churches who held on to truth have adopted some of the methods of the culture, such as opinion polling, in designing their communication.
- This has often resulted in <u>watering down</u> the <u>message</u> to make it sound more palatable to modern ears. This approach often works in drawing people into entertainment-oriented church services.

- The ideal would be to follow through with more depth of study as people become more comfortable in church and better acquainted with theology. The churches must devote serious effort and planning to develop transitions toward greater depth.
- In practice, we often see small churches with indepth study and large churches without much depth—or with a little group of members studying in greater depth on their own.

Habits affect life decisions. 50 years ago, Bible believing churches held services and small groups at specific times—following a predictable pattern. Sunday morning meant Sunday School followed by Worship Services. Sunday evening meant group Bible studies focused on spiritual growth, followed by a shorter and more informal worship service. Wednesday nights had prayer meetings and business meetings.

- You could go to any church in a particular denomination any place in the country and find predictable sorts of large and small groups at those times. And you did not have to find a babysitter, because there were classes for the children.
- Sometimes the number of routine classes reduced the effectiveness of the studies, or caused burn-out. But on the positive side, habits of attendance were easy to develop.

- Modern trends toward greater variety of small groups have increased interest levels, but have paradoxically made cultivating the HABIT of attendance more challenging. A fluid schedule does not promote habitual effort.
- □ Further, when the children and youth meet at different times and places from the adults, the family becomes fragmented or harried in its habits of attendance. Youth group becomes a world of its own.

- Christian growth requires developing habits conducive to growth. At the very least, churches should strive to arrange start and finish times of classes to work together, so people are not cultivating "waiting around" as the main habit.
- Churchwide transitions toward greater depth require habits of attendance. Growth takes place over time.
- Shallowness is automatic if only a little time is spent per week in religious attendance.

- One Biblically sound suggestion to appeal to feminists would be a regular weekly small group time, such as Sunday evening, where groups are gender-specific. Women could gain teaching skills among other women, and could address issues that cannot be addressed in couple's classes.
- Feminists assume sexism is the reason churches require men teachers for couples' classes, but have no opportunities for women to teach adults.

#### Where should we go from here?

How do we bring the essential truths of the faith back to their right place of influence? We can start with the churches, and work toward spiritual growth from within, and ALSO reach beyond the walls of the church. Both must be ongoing emphases.

## What should we do about these things?

- The lostness of the postmodern generation cries out for real fellowship and acceptance, and for a repudiation of the lack of love in the past, especially where oppression was part of the culture. If we fail to realize that racism was wrong, we will never reach a generation for whom it is the only wrong they recognize.
- A focus on religious experience alone is a failure. It is like giving a band-aid and a lollipop for cancer. But religious experience of fellowship is a gateway toward truth. Churches must create the other side of the gate, and not just stop with activities and shallowness.

# What should we do about these things?

 We should learn apologetics and teach apologetics in our churches. People walk through the doors (and are dragged through them by their parents) with belief systems that cover a range from traditional, orthodox belief to modernism to postmodernism to total confusion. Apologetics can create bridges of communication that give all those locations a path to truth. Objective truth.

## What should we do about these things?

- In all these things, we MUST stand for truth, and we must do so in a loving manner.
- We cannot gloss over truth for the sake of conflict avoidance. Love accepts some degree of conflict over ideas. Rejection of the person because of potential conflict is not love.
- Truth is the foundational issue for everyone seeking God. Faith and truth are intertwined.

### What should we do about these things?

- We must depend on God's Holy Spirit to use truth to reach lost souls.
- Postmodernism sees people merely as groupmembers. God sees people as beloved eternal individuals who are potentially members of His eternal family. We need to see as He sees.
- It is possible truly to love the potential you can envision in another person, even if the present actuality is unpleasant. Faith sees potential, and goes toward it, and does not demand perfection RIGHT NOW.

### What should we do about these things?

- On a personal level, we should study the Bible for ourselves.
- We should not just take a sermon or Sunday School lesson per week as sufficient.
- We should study the ENTIRE Bible.
- We should ask God to open new opportunities to discuss these matters with others.
- We should be thoughtful and courageous to speak up. We have promises for God's help.

Thus says the LORD God, "I Myself Will search for My sheep. I will deliver them From all the places Where they were scattered On a cloudy, gloomy day.

I will bring them out. I will gather them. I will bring them home. I will feed them-in good pasture by streams of water. I will lead them to rest....

I will seek the lost.

I will bring back the scattered.

I will bandage the broken.

I will strengthen the sick.

I will feed the wicked--with judgment.

I will remove the trampers who cause harm.

My flock will no longer be in danger.

My Son will be their Shepherd.

I will make them a blessing.

I am with them and they are Mine.

### Homework

In 3 sets

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-33. Why did God give His law, according to verse 29, and why does He want us to fear Him?

#### POSTMODERN TIMES pages 190-207

Why would Veith say "postmodernism's most insidious influence, however, is in our spiritual lives?"

- In what way is rejection of apologetic evidence in religion related to postmodernism?
- How does the postmodern definition of tolerance define a barrier to heaven?
- How does it open a way to paganism and witchcraft?

- Read Romans 5:1-21. How much of the human race was damaged by Adam's sin, according to this chapter?
- Read I Peter 4:18. Why did Jesus Christ die on the cross according to this verse? Did Jesus die on the cross merely as an example, or was something else involved?
- What follows from Acts 4:12 regarding the idea of many ways to heaven?
- What keeps people out of heaven according to Revelation 21:8 and Romans 3:9-23?

- What was the purpose of Messiah's suffering according to Isaiah 53:4-6 and according to II Corinthians 5:17-21?
- Psalm 139:1-24. What does this Psalm imply about God's knowledge of our future choices?
- Read Isaiah 46:8-13. What does this passage say about God's knowledge of events before they occur?

POSTMODERN TIMES pages 209-223

- What is "the good news and the bad news about Christianity in America today?
- How has systematic exclusion of Christianity from the culture resulted both in isolation of and watering down of the message?
- What are the beliefs of mega shift theology?
- □ What is wrong with that?

- How might approaches to presenting Christianity differ with the audience? How might the same message be effectively presented in varying ways to the following groups: Postmodernists, evolutionary biologists, social scientists, foreign exchange students, college students who have left the faith?
- Which groups benefit the most from a clear presentation for evidences of the truthfulness of the Bible?

Compare Colossians 4:2-6 and I Corinthians 2:1-16. Consider the techniques of marketing. What principles do you think should guide Christians as they try to talk to friends about their faith? Is it possible for a church to use marketing techniques without over-simplifying the message?

#### POSTMODERN TIMES pages 225-234

- How does marketing apply or not apply to evangelism?
- How does persecution of religious believers enter the picture?

A long-term question to keep in mind as you read the Bible: How did individuals in the Bible share their faith? Think about Abraham, King David, Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter. In what ways did they tailor their message to their audience? In what ways did they build on the things their audiences already knew?

Imagine the Apostle Paul with a computer terminal and internet access. What do you think he would do?