

WitnessKit 3
God And Religions

Class 2 What is
Deconstruction?
What is Language?
What is Lostness?

Psalm 100:

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

Serve the LORD with gladness.

Come before His presence with singing.

Know ye that the LORD He is God.

It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves.

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving
and into His courts with praise.

Be thankful unto Him and bless His name.

For the LORD is good.

His mercy is everlasting
and His truth endureth to all generations.

The Freedoms We Enjoy

- ❑ Came from a time in history when people were hungry for God's word. They studied it. Legal scholars studied it.
- ❑ Churches expected high standards among their people.
- ❑ The culture at large expected everyone to take God's perspective seriously.
- ❑ Because people paid attention to God's perspective, as expressed in the Bible, they were able to enjoy freedom without chaos.

They wrote the Declaration of Independence

- In the desire to preserve liberty and representative government in America,
- when those liberties were being eroded by callous, faraway government.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident...

That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...

This story from the past shows the strength of a Biblical worldview in that time.

In 1843, a young scholar named Mellen Chamberlain began to study the origins of the American Revolution. He met an elder soldier, 91 years old, who had fought in the battle of Lexington and Concord, the first battle of that war for liberty.

The **ideals of liberty** have reached around the world since that war. The source for this story is David Hackett Fischer's *Liberty and Freedom*, Oxford Press, 2005.

Mellen Chamberlain conducted the following interview with Captain Levi Preston.

- *“Captain Preston, what made you go to the Concord Fight?” The elder soldier bristled at the idea that anyone had made him fight.*
- *“What did I go for?” he replied. The scholar missed the meaning and tried again.*
- *“Were you oppressed by the Stamp Act?”*
- *“I never saw any stamps, and I always understood that none were ever sold,” he replied.”*

“Well, what about the tea tax?”

- *“Tea tax? I never drank a drop of the stuff. The boys threw it all overboard.”*
- *“But I suppose you had been reading Harrington, Sidney, and Locke about the eternal principle of liberty?”*
- *“I never heard of those men,” Captain Preston said. “The only books we had were **the Bible, the Catechism, Watt’s Psalms, and hymns and the almanacs.**”*

“Well, then, what was the matter?”

- *“Young man, what we meant in going for those Redcoats was this: we always had been free, and we meant to be free always. They didn’t mean we should.”*

Captain Preston was informed by a Biblical worldview.

“The only books we had were the Bible, the Catechism, Watt’s Psalms, and hymns and the almanacs.”

“We hold these truths to be self-evident...

- *That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...”*

The Postmodernists would never have been able to write that document.

- They cannot even read it.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident...

- That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...

What do you mean by “We?”

- The people who wrote these words were white males, including a slave owner.
- “All **men** are created equal” excludes women, who could not vote, and slaves, who were later treated as 3/5 of a person in the constitution.
- The words “**Created** and **Creator**” exclude atheists and non-theistic religious persons.

“**Truth**” is an exclusivist concept.”

Welcome to Deconstruction!

- Deconstruction “unmasks a text” to reveal the **oppressive power structures** hidden in it.
- Deconstruction turns idealism into hypocrisy.
- Deconstruction destroys hope.

Deconstruction lauds cynicism.

- Cynicism destroys productivity because it de-motivates.
- Hope and ideals are necessary for optimism, and optimism is necessary for productivity.
- What kind of a world will the postmodernists give us when they are 40 years old?

The **truth** about the Declaration of Independence

- Is **not** the deconstructed text.
- The deconstructed text does not reveal the true intent of the Declaration.
- The Declaration was intended to produce the fairest possible society, and it eventually did.

The truth is ...

The Declaration produced the fairest and most open society of its time—its ideals gave us the most egalitarian society on earth, and did so at a time when slavery was rampant all over the world.

It took time for the ideals to reach all levels of society.

The ideals won out after a very bloody civil war and a tumultuous struggle for civil rights. The IDEALS were the true intent of the text!

“All men are created equal”

includes all women and African Americans and Native Americans. If we know the history of the English language, we know that MAN is a word for HUMANITY, and that **all human beings are created equal.**

The Biblical worldview places men and women as equals before God—“***fellow heirs of the grace of Christ.***” The Bible calls *partiality* a **sin** in the book of James—and that was written in the Roman Empire where most of the population were slaves.

“All men are created equal”

The New Testament claims that ***“There is no slave or free or male or female for all are one in Christ.”***

Time and war and struggle were required to bring the truth into its rightful place—the idea of INDIVIDUAL human equality before the law and before God.

It was **not** “group identity” that brought the needed change. **It was a return to the ideals in the Declaration—the UNIFYING principles that needed to be upheld.**

“Group identity” was the problem, not the solution!

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Expresses those thoughts. It begins with the idea of our nation, *“conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal...”* and it concludes with a call to continue devotion to that cause, *“that this nation, under God, shall have **a new birth of freedom** and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”*

People going against the ideals

Were responsible for the hypocrisy.

- People living consistently with the ideals abolished slavery and eventually extended constitutional protections to Native Americans and eventually established civil rights in the law for minorities and women.
- Many of those individuals who worked to make the **ideals** into **practical reality** had a Biblical worldview—think of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

“Fellow countrymen: At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at first. Then, a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest...

“which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energy of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thought were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it.”

“While the inaugural address

Was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide efforts, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.”

“One eighth of the nation was

Colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party

“expected for the war

The magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us

“judge not that we be not judged.”

*The prayers of both COULD NOT BE ANSWERED fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. ‘Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come. But woe to the man by whom the offense cometh.’ If we shall suppose that **American slavery is one of those offenses** which, in the Providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and*

“that He gives to both North and South this terrible war

As the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondmen’s 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid

“by another, drawn with the sword,

*As was said 3000 years ago, so still it must be said,
‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous
altogether.’*

*With malice toward none, with charity for all; with
firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the
right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to
bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who
shall have born the battle, and for his widow, and for
his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish
a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with
all nations.”*

The Civil War was the most deadly in all of American history.

Abraham Lincoln was seeing it as God's judgment on the nation for the sin of slavery. Yet he was holding out the ideas of humility, forgiveness, restoration, re-uniting.

Every word of his address was an attempt to apply a Biblical worldview to the terrible conflicts of his time— the conflict of the war itself, and the conflict of slavery against the Biblical ideals of the nation.

He faced these issues in the crucible of war— the war forced him to face the core issues.

We may need to make a side trip to look at slavery in the Bible.

Slavery is a specific case of the problem of suffering in this world, since it always involves terrible suffering. God hates suffering. The New Testament shows that He suffered for us, so that we would not have to suffer eternally.

One of the things that makes slavery important to address: The Bible has quite a number of passages that speak about it. We need to understand why that is so.

Foundational Beliefs

- God is Good—totally Good.
- God hates evil.
- God wants us to hate evil. Psalm 97:10 commands, *“Hate evil, you who love the LORD.”*
- Slavery is evil.
- God hates slavery.
- God wants us to hate slavery.

The Bible tells us we live in a fallen world.

- The world is full of suffering, and each life will experience suffering.
- The Bible does not leave us helpless in the face of suffering.
- The Bible says we have real decision-making power, and we can make the world a better place. In fact, God requires that we try, so much as we are able, to create a just home and that we influence our nation to follow His standards. We are responsible moral agents in His sight.

Abraham Lincoln mentioned just punishment of the sin of financial unfairness toward slaves in the financial losses of war to the country.

This has Biblical precedent—in the Exodus, the Israelite slaves were told to request gifts—plunder—from the Egyptians on their way out of Egypt. Because of the plagues, the Egyptians freely gave much wealth to them. This was seen as payment for their slave labor, and as plunder because GOD HAD FOUGHT FOR THEM. Much of that wealth became incorporated into the tabernacle's construction, as they gave some of it back to God.

Slavery was woven into the fabric of ancient society, and remained so

Until America's Civil War. It was so much woven into eastern societies that **everyone** **was perceived as a slave**, with a hierarchy of slavery from the lowest spheres of life all the way up to the emperor, so that **only the emperor was free**. In Hamurabi's Code, **no word exists for freeman**. **The opposite of slave was "master."** Each master was himself a slave to a higher power.—also found in *Liberty and Freedom* by David Hackett Fischer.

This can be seen in Ezra's prayer after Babylonian and Persian captivity where slavery was pervasive.

Ezra 9:6-9—*"O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads... On account of our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity... But now for a brief moment, grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant..."*

This can be seen in Ezra's prayer after Babylonian and Persian captivity.

Ezra 9:6-9—and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are slaves, yet in our bondage, our God has not forsaken us, but has extended loving-kindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.”

Notice the wall in Jerusalem.

The wailing wall remains until today as a symbol of God's ongoing concern for His nation.

God has advice in His word for those trapped in such a slavery system.

His advice should **not** be construed as condoning such a system. In His nation and His church, he set up structures that were designed to alleviate the sin of slavery, even within a culture that condoned it.

In fact, the only legal slavery in ancient Israel had an escape clause, so that it was only a voluntary arrangement.

God has advice in His word for those trapped in such a system.

Deuteronomy 23:15-17 states ¹⁵ "You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶ He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him." Deut 23:15-16 (NKJV)

God has advice in His word for those trapped in such a system.

Rather, God's advice regarding slavery is for **COPING** with the helplessness of being trapped in such a system. The Bible was written over 1500 years, under various forms of government. During the New Testament era, the vast majority of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. No partiality was allowed within the church.

God has advice in His word for those trapped in such a system.

During the writing of the New Testament, God required the early church to treat slaves and masters as equals, even though they were required to serve in their current economic system.

In fact, the issue had to be dealt with in the Bible, in the context of the times, because it was so prevalent.

Even though most people in the Roman Empire were slaves, the issue is only treated peripherally because people are treated as equals in the Bible. **Equality** before God is assumed.

I Corinthians 7:21-23

“Were you called while a slave? (The majority of people in the Roman Empire were slaves. Being called refers to being called to salvation from sins.) Do not worry about it. But if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called.”

Galatians 3:26 & 28 & 29

“For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

The churches themselves

Were little islands of freedom and equality in a vast sea of hierarchical slavery.

The Epistle of James demands that no distinctions due to social status be made in the church, and it defines the showing of partiality as sin.

The Roman social structures

Were something like this.

The nobility were at the top,

free citizens of Rome next,

women,

slaves and

conquered people groups next,

then prisoners.

What status did the Apostle Paul Have in Roman Society?

The Apostle Paul wrote much of the Bible from prison.

His work was accepted in spite of that fact.

The early church was very much in tune with the idea of human equality before God without reference to social status.

Even if God's servant does not

- Receive fair wages in this life, God promises them fair wages in heaven—Ephesians 6:5-9—“knowing that whatever good thing each one does, he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”
- The Roman Empire would not last forever. God's people would.

One form of slavery common in Europe until the modern age--

Prevalent in Russia until the Russian revolution in the early 20th century—was serfdom, where slaves were bound to the land as tenant farmers.

The ancient legal commands of the Bible prohibited that kind of system from developing in Israel, because the land could not be bought and sold and accumulated in perpetuity, but reverted to the owner family in the year of jubilee.

The rules for indentured servitude in ancient Israel

Were designed to minimize slavery, even for payment of debts, by limiting the number of years of service to 7 at most.

Destroying that land-and-voluntary service system was a cause for God's judgment—Isaiah 5: 8-13.

Slavery was one of the causes of the Babylonian captivity—Jeremiah chapter 34, and Jeremiah 22:13 –“Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness and his upper rooms without justice, who uses his neighbor's services without pay and does not give him his wages.”

Protection of Human Rights

- Another key verse in the Old Testament about slavery—it had an escape hatch. The slave had the right to leave. Deuteronomy 23:15-16,
- ¹⁵ "You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶ He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him. Deut 23:15-16 (NKJV)
- Numbers 15:15 ¹⁵ Native-born Israelites and foreigners are equal before the LORD and are subject to the same decrees. This is a **permanent** law for you, to be observed from generation to generation. (NLT)

God took action in the Old Testament When the Egyptian bondage

became unbearable

and again when the Israelites abandoned Him
and His principles to serve idols prior to
Babylonian exile.

That abandonment of principle included making
permanent slaves of freemen.

How did God define unbearable?

In both instances, the oppression had reached the point where murder of innocents became the norm.

At that point, God intervened drastically.

Slavery was a descent on that downward slope toward murder

because it failed to understand human equality and accountability before God.

It helps to step back and look at

The issue in historical perspective rather than just looking at Bible verses as stand-alone items.

Clearly the Bible teaches individual responsibility and rights before God, no matter what situation a person experiences in this life.

God allows some evils, but never condones any evils.

Clearly also, God hates slavery. God hates sin.

God wants the best for each of us because He loves us, even though He allows conditions that He deplures.

He has eternal goals and can see the future and all aspects of every difficulty.

He expects us to make decisions, including political ones, in keeping with His good principles.

Most of the history of the world

Has involved the existence of slavery. The Bible is a universal book, for all people and for all time. It clearly shows individual human beings as equals before God, and it reveals our responsibility to stand for that truth.

It reveals that God only allows evil to continue so that more people have time to repent, out of mercy for all. God never wishes for evil to grow, but much evil comes from the wrong choices people make.

God made a temporary-eternal trade-off in the matter of slavery in Egypt,

And He told about the trade-off in Genesis 15:1-21. The Amorites in the land of Canaan were still believing in the true God in Abraham's time. God knew that in 400 plus years, they would abandon Him, and become devastatingly and violently corrupt, as their neighbors had already become.

He postponed fulfilling the promise to give the land to Abraham's family until that time. Part of that delay took place in slavery in Egypt.

God made a temporary-eternal trade-off in the matter of slavery in Egypt,

The eternal part of the trade-off related to the eternal destiny of the Amorite tribal people, and to the eternal destiny of all future human beings because of Moses' beginning in writing the Bible.

God allows evil. He never condones evil.

- He intervenes when evil becomes intolerable.
- When we have political freedom, we have political responsibilities before God to choose RIGHTLY.
- Abraham Lincoln was right in his second inaugural. The pragmatists got it wrong when they wrote the constitution.

You may ask, what is the difference

- Between condoning evil and allowing evil?
- The answer to that is eternal judgment. God will eventually set matters to right. He will judge every action, thought, word, and intention of every soul for eternity.
- The knowledge of this certainty acts as a barrier or a **limitation on depths of evil** in the decisions of people who believe it.
- Thus a Biblical worldview acts as a barrier to prevent evil, even among those who do not fully understand Biblical principles about contemporary issues.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident...

That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...

Isaiah 5:20-24 and 6:9-13

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!...who justify the wicked for a bribe and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right....for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel....”

“Go and tell this people, ‘Keep on listening but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand....’”

Because Postmodernists do not believe...

in the existence of objective truth, they feel free to deconstruct a text to mean the opposite of what is actually says.

They feel free to call evil good and good evil.

They feel free to believe good and evil are **only** relative terms.

We want to see how they reached that place of confusion.

We want to understand how to stand for truth in a postmodern world, so that the whole world is not brought to confusion.

Everyone can see the confused direction of postmodernism

3
concepts

By understanding 3 concepts:

1. **The postmodern perspective of language**
2. **The postmodern method of deconstructing language**
3. **The postmodern sense of lostness.**

The postmodern perspective of language

One of the pioneers of postmodernism is named Richard Rorty. In REASON IN THE BALANCE, Dr. Philip Johnson describes Rorty's descent into the abyss of postmodernism. Rorty was from a communist family. He wanted to accept Platonic idealism and universal truths, but without accepting the existence of God. *He could not find the universals without God.*

Rorty chose to believe that

“Truth” only means that an idea is consistent within one’s own system of thought, but that it has no necessary relationship to external reality.

Thus to Rorty, truth represents

- coherence within a system,
- not coherence with reality.

The two opposing views of truth

Are described by the terms
objectivist and ***constructivist***.

Enlightenment Theists and modernists are **objectivists**, believing that truth has a necessary relationship of **coherence with reality**.

Postmodernists are constructivists, believing that “truth” is constructed within the language and thought-forms of a group, and without a necessary relationship to reality. In fact, they may view the language filter as **constructing** a personal, subjective reality.

Postmodernists believe the thoughts of one's own mind...

Are **constructs** of one's language and social group. Everything is understood through a filter of language. Language is composed of words which have meaning set by the group. The meaning is **arbitrary**.

What a modernist or Biblical realist would think explains reality, a postmodernist considers a **mere STORY, or a narrative**. The narrative is "true" if it fits the beliefs of the group, even if it contradicts the beliefs of a different group.

Postmodernists think that...

no “meta-narratives” exist which are equally true for everyone. They view “meta-narratives” or worldviews with suspicion and deny their validity. They see “**meta-narratives**” as **totalizing**.

The word “totalizing” is used to mean **totalitarian**, and to represent **forcing a specific group’s ideas on all groups**. Postmodernists see totalizing narratives as oppressive by their very nature.

Postmodernists

See *universal ideals* as oppressive, by their nature. They view conservatives as oppressive when conservatives try to retain or *conserve* ideals. But ideals are the glue that holds society together. So we have a problem here.

Postmodernists view “totalizing”

Narratives as oppressive automatically if the people who express them believe in objective truth's existence.

For this reason, postmodernists reject Biblical Christianity as intolerant precisely because Biblical Christians think the universals apply to everyone. Thus, strangely, postmodernism views individual equality before God and accountability to Him as oppressive concepts.

If no objective truth exists,

- Manipulation replaces truth.
- Thus the most important and enriching truth becomes a manipulative technique to gain power at some other group's expense.
- This makes cynicism and suspicion of others' motives the hallmarks of postmodernism.
- If truth is only a construct of the group, and all groups are in a struggle for power, why is honesty important? What is honesty?

If words only mean the arbitrary

Thing the group decides they mean, how can one communicate to someone in a different group?

- Thus the postmodernists may speak of being in a “prison house of language” – meaning that the person cannot communicate outside that language or even think outside the arbitrary meanings of that language.

What questions can reach into that closed circle of belief...

and unlock the prison door?

- Is it possible for a postmodernist to learn a foreign language?
- Is it possible for a postmodernist to share experiences with someone in a different group? Can a postmodernist enjoy a hike and mountain scenery with someone outside his language group? Or a meal? Or a ride in a boat?
- Are there any words whose meaning is not arbitrary? Are there words that translate across all languages?

Does a universal human experience have to be “totalizing?”

Can a non-Italian non-Catholic enjoy *Everybody Loves Raymond*?

How did *I Love Lucy* ever work as a sitcom, since Lucy and Ricky were from different language groups? Could the audience understand the show if the audience member was not from their two groups?

Can't we talk about a universal experience without that being a totalizing discourse?

Watching tv seems to be a Universal experience for young postmodernists. Even though cable and satellite tv make many diverse programs available, aren't *elements of universal experience* involved in the process of watching? Can't people from different groups communicate about that experience? Can't they watch the same show with subtitles and have a pretty good idea of what each other saw?

Can't we extend that discussion to matters of principle without THAT

Being a totalizing discourse?

- Can't we at least agree that it is a universal principle that oppression is wrong?
- Of course, we have to define oppression, and your definition may have different boundaries than mine, but the core concept is surely a universal principle. If one universal is true, why not other universals?
- Can that be the **ONLY** universal principle if that makes defining oppression impossible?

Because

- Postmodernism is a retreat from the very idea of truth, a few sound bites will not bridge the worldview divide.
- A course such as this one should be helpful for a Postmodernist to read, to begin to understand the difficulties in implementing such a view.
- At its core, Postmodernism is well-intentioned, but impossible to implement successfully for the good of all.

Everyone can see the confused direction of postmodernism

3 Concepts

within
Postmodernism

By understanding 3 concepts:

1. **The postmodern perspective of language**
2. The postmodern method of deconstructing language
3. The postmodern sense of lostness.

The postmodern method of deconstructing language

Because postmodernists see society as a competing set of groups locked in a struggle for power, they see the writings of the dominant groups as a manipulative way of preserving their power.

Postmodernists feel justified in tearing the dominant groups' writings apart for the purpose of revealing their evil oppression of other groups.

The postmodern method of deconstructing language

- However, the groups out of power who achieve power are expected to also act oppressively when they get the chance.
- Professor Stanley Fish applied that sort of analysis to free speech in an article called “There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech and It’s a Good Thing Too.”
(Quoted on Pages 162-163 of POSTMODERN TIMES)
- He views all **principles** as mere **preferences**, so recommends that groups persuade others through political battle in order to silence those whose speech offends them.

Professor Stanley Fish said,
“Someone is always going to be

restricted next, and it’s your job to make sure
that someone is not you.”

- But wait! Isn’t silencing those whose views offend you **a form of oppression?**
- Isn’t the intention of the first amendment of the Constitution to protect the rights of everyone to express opinions?

It is hard to see...

how holding the idea of objective universal principles ...

- Is more **“totalizing”**
 - ▣ than trying to silence everyone whose speech offends you.
- And how can reform ever take place if those who dissent are silenced?
- But that is exactly how postmodernists think.

A method postmodernists use

To reveal the hidden oppression in documents is called deconstruction.

If a document constructs reality through language, the document's hidden meaning can supposedly be revealed by deconstructing that language.

To understand Deconstruction

We must understand its basic assumptions.

8 assumptions involved in Deconstruction:

- Assumption #1: Language is only subjective, not objective.
- Assumption #2: Language shapes what we think.
- Assumption #3: Meaning is socially constructed by the hearers and by the group.
- Assumption #4: Each language is a self-contained system with arbitrary symbols.

8 assumptions involved in Deconstruction

Assumption #5: The meaning of the words is a self-contained part of that language system.

Assumption #6: Language is changeable, so meaning is slippery. Each word's meaning includes the idea of its opposite or of excluded meanings.

8 assumptions involved in Deconstruction

Assumption #7: Societies are inherently oppressive.

Assumption #8: The true condition of a culture is masked by its language, but the mask can be pulled away by deconstruction.

We looked at the Declaration of Independence, Deconstructed

- **The Postmodernists claim that the meaning of the text of the Declaration, with high sounding ideals, is contradicted by the subtext, which reveals restrictions on the rights of various groups.**
- **Because postmodernists see all societies as inherently oppressive, they can choose a grievance group appropriate to any text and deconstruct the text relative to that group.**

Since they reject the idea of **objective truth...**

They have no sense of what is a fair look at the meaning of a text and what constitutes *unfair twisting* of the text.

- A definition of truth that matches objective reality is necessary for an honest assessment of meaning. Otherwise, any twisting of a text will do, no matter how far from the intentions of the authors.
- This leads to serious confusion.

If a person takes all the standard

“Great Books of Western Civilization” and **deconstructs them**, he will become very confused about how our free society came about, or about how ANY free society comes into existence. That is part of the problem with postmodernism’s rejection of Western traditions.

- Postmodernism carries within it the seeds of deconstructing **freedom itself**.

Here is a **most critical issue**, as I see it, with postmodernism.

- ❑ Rejecting objective truth and rejecting objective universals provide no way of establishing appropriate boundaries on violence.
- ❑ **Appropriate boundaries on violence and the rule of law, REQUIRE an overarching commitment to universals, not to group values which may be contradictory to other groups' values.**

The rule of law first and foremost restricts political violence.

- **Group-condoned-violence is precisely the ingredient that dissolves liberty.** Democracy cannot endure when a political system condones violence on the part of individuals acting on their own, and when the law fails to restrain that kind of decision.
- We have seen this in pre-World War II Japan and its allies—read *Modern Times* by Paul Johanson. We have seen it in “one election dictatorships” south of our borders.

We can see this in the “nation building task” in the aftermath of war.

- If a nation, attempting to start representative government, **allows** spontaneous violence, the most ruthless parties will gain power. Everyone will be afraid to vote for the less ruthless party.
- We have seen how this works already—and when the ruthless ones gain power, that is the last free election for a long time—if that one could be called free.

Universals are required for nation building to succeed.

- The violence issue has to be dealt with **in a universal manner**, with restrictions on violence that apply to everyone, **so that violence does not become a means of access to power.**

Defining Oppression

Requires a commitment to universal values.
Otherwise one person's oppression is
another person's liberty to do as he pleases
toward someone else.

Deconstruction as a literary technique
obscures universals and makes the
oppression-relieving goals of
postmodernism impossible to achieve.

We need universals to even
define oppression.

We see this very clearly in the abortion
debate:

Postmodernism only recognizes the
woman's oppression.

It rejects the universal right to life of the
unborn

and the **universal right (and
responsibility)** of a father to care for his
child.

How is the woman more oppressed than the child?

- Or the husband who loves his child and who cannot stop the abortion?
- How can oppression be defined without universals?
- Is oppression having to find childcare for an unwanted infant?
- Is oppression having to place a child for adoption when other options are not available?
- Is oppression being torn limb from limb in the womb?

This is not saying that “postmodernists are prone to violence.”

Please do not misunderstand. Postmodernism as a theory does not provide a way to set appropriate boundaries on violence.

New postmodernists are likely to have ignored this issue and to have absorbed their beliefs about appropriate boundaries from other traditions without thinking about them.

But Postmodernism is a failure in this arena, where it is most idealistic in wanting to prevent oppression.

Everyone can see the confused direction of postmodernism

3 concepts

By understanding 3 concepts:

1. The postmodern perspective of language
2. The postmodern method of deconstructing language
3. The postmodern sense of lostness.

The postmodern sense of lostness.

- The rejection of the existence of universals means a rejection of individual identity.
- It is not immediately obvious to someone with a Biblical worldview as to why this would be so.
- Rather than believing human identity is based upon universal ideas, the postmodernist bases individual human identity upon the group or web of groups to which one belongs.
- This makes identity free-floating and not fixed, because the groups can shift. The language used by the groups can shift. The slang can shift very quickly.

One's Status as an Insider or Outsider Can Shift.

- The style of the group can shift. Style is the marker that shows whether an individual is an insider or outsider, so style has a profound effect upon sense of identity for the postmodernist.
- One author has described this as “the incredible lightness of being.” Her perception of her own identity was in flux, virtually unknowable.
- The postmodernist sees role playing as all there is. They have difficulty finding the SELF at the core of the roles.

They become lost in a continuous

series of roles played during long empty lives of meaningless activity, followed by death.

- Style and group membership are all there is.
- It is difficult to build commitment in such a system of belief.
- It is a serious thing to abandon the true and living God to serve an idol named “Style.”

Postmodernism has rejected God as a knowable reality or source of universals.

Their best guess is that a “person” is merely a human organism’s responses to events as perceived through his own subjectivity.

Some see nothing special about that organism — no reason to see humans as more valuable than other organisms.

Some postmodernists see “speciesism” as evil as racism—because they do not see humans as more valuable than animals. This—coupled with the belief that the group sets right and wrong—leads to accepting violent animal rights groups.

Postmodernism's lostness

Is a loss of the sense of self.

- They may be drawn toward this abyss because they think it represents all that can be known.
- It may be an expression of the confusion of our age, with many competing worldviews receiving a media forum, and Biblical Christianity silenced or ridiculed or seeming too shallow to be believable.

Lostness in the Biblical Sense

Is significantly different. Human beings are not lost in terms of identity, but in terms of moral failure. A person IS his soul, a special creation of God, with unique gifts and talents.

His soul is real, not illusion! His soul is eternal. His soul matters. It is heavy, not light, weighted with the glory of His identity before God.

Every Soul Matters.

- Because he is so important to God, his decisions can potentially bring him into God's kingdom as citizen and family member,
- OR they can lead him away from God into eternal disaster.

His lostness is his propensity to choose against God's goodness.

Choosing to reject God's good rules causes alienation from God.

But there is hope!

God is the Good Shepherd who searches for His lost sheep, His lost souls. He wants them to be His family members who belong forever.

He does not want anyone to stay lost.

What should we do about these things?

- How can we stand for truth in a postmodern world?
- How can we convince a postmodernist that truth, objective reality truth, really does exist?
- How can we convince a postmodernist that God's truth is the truth that matters?

Most churches' approaches so far

Have not been effective. The typical current approach is to downplay truth and focus on emotional experience and activities. But that **does not reach the core issue** of lostness.

- Big impersonal worship services are unlikely to help, because the sense of belonging is often absent.

God is the answer...

- We must pray for the Good Shepherd to search for the lost souls and not to give up on them.
- We must pray seriously and persistently for individuals who have fallen into this confusion.
- We must love them enough to pray.
- And if we pray according to His will (and this IS), we know He hears us and we have the answer.

Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

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.

Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

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....

Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

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

Homework Class 2 Set 1

- Read Jeremiah 8:4-9. This was written at a time when the ancient nation had fallen into terrible idolatry, and apparently some of the religious leaders had modified God's word and caused people to forget God's law. How does God express His opinion of that kind of wisdom?
- POSTMODERN TIMES pages 51-70
- What is "deconstruction?" What does it say about "meaning?"
- What do postmodernists mean by "unmasking a text?"

Homework Class 2 Set 1

- Are their techniques fair to the authors of the texts they are deconstructing?
- What are the goals of academia as described in “Doing Without Truth?”
- How do “moral judgments keep asserting themselves,” as described on page 62?
- Contrast the postmodernist and Biblical views of language.
- How does I John 1:27 contrast with the discussion about interpretive community?

Homework Class 2 Set 2

- Read Luke chapter 15. How did Jesus use the word “lost” in these two parables?
- POSTMODERN TIMES pages 71-90 (This is a very important chapter.)
- How does the punk rock use of the term “lost” compare to the definition used by evangelicals?
- How does the relativistic approach to truth diminish what it means to be human?

Homework Class 2 Set 2

- How did Heidegger recommend attaining “authentic experience of being?”
- How is radical environmentalism connected to postmodernism?
- Why is postmodernism more tolerant or embracing of **Marxism** than of **capitalism**?
- Why is postmodernism **resistant to empirical evidence** of the ways economies work?

Homework Class 2 Set 2

- How does Veith counter the postmodernist attack on “universal humanity,” found on pages 77-80?
- What are dangers to society posed by postmodernist pragmatists, seen on pages 83-86?
- How does a Biblical Christian worldview solve the inherent contradictions and problems posed by postmodernism?

Homework Class 2 Set 3

- Read Proverbs 19:28. What effect does propaganda have on justice?
- Read Proverbs 21:28. What does this verse imply about God's opinion regarding truth?
- What does it imply about our responsibility when encountering propaganda?
- POSTMODERN TIMES pages 91-106.
- Why do the postmodernists attempt to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, and between history and fiction?

Homework Class 2 Set 3

- How does this affect the trustworthiness of their work?
- How does it make their work related to propaganda?
- What is “reader response criticism?”
- How is the loss of a sense of history related to the rise of postmodernism in academia?

Homework Class 2 Set 3

- What does “chutzpah” have to do with art?
- Do postmodernists consider categories like beauty in their definition of art?
- How and why did Andy Warhol get rich?