

The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement. Second Edition.
David S. Dockery, editor. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Mich.,
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Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

There is no way we can effectively obey our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:19f.) unless we rightly understand our times. Nor can we direct our own lives without giving serious thought to the multiple choices our contemporary world presents to us. One of the most talked about but little understood new philosophy is "postmodernism." But what does this term really mean? Clearly, it is intended to make a break with modernity and the modern age. A story is told of three umpires. The first, representing the pre-modern perspective, explains his method as, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way they are." The second, a modernist, asserts "I call 'em the way I see 'em." The third umpire, a postmodernist, claims "they ain't nothin' until I call 'em." In more philosophical parlance, for modernism, there is still a universe to be known and a truth to be found. The project of the mind is to go about its discovery. For postmodernism, truth is not to be found but, rather, to be created. Today's usual phraseology is, "You have your truth and I have mine."

What is the postmodern world like? For the postmodernists the question no longer is "Is there a God" but, "Which God?" The characteristics of their world are a disbelief in objective truth and moral relativism. Claims to truth, mission work and sharing one's faith are viewed as improper behaviour and bad manners. Christians who teach that Christ is the only path to salvation are dismissed as intolerant for supposedly trying to force personal beliefs onto other people. Postmodernism goes beyond relativism, it impacts literature, the media, architecture, and morality. The result is a culture that has lost a sense of direction and its sense of shame, resulting in a society which is morally adrift. Religion is trivialized. Faith communities are routinely ignored or marginalized because their moral discourse contains "God talk." In practice, in Canada especially, freedom of religion has become freedom from religion.

Postmodernism presents a serious threat to evangelical and Reformed Christians. For example, postmodernism has become the occasion for much fuzzy and slippery thinking. It also creates formidable obstacles for evangelism and missions. Yet a church faithful to the Gospel must accept the challenges of living out the implications of a Biblically formed worldview, while proclaiming the unchanging truth of the Gospel of Jesus to this rapidly changing contemporary world.

Among the contributors to this book are such prominent evangelicals as Carl F.H. Henry and Thomas Oden. All the contributors approach *The Challenge of Postmodernism* from their own perspectives and field of expertise, but with shared commitment to the Bible as the unique and ultimate revelation to mankind. Because there are a variety of scholars and perspectives, some essays are easier to read than others. And some tend to overlap. I do hope that pastors, teachers, and youth directors will read this well-informed, well-argued book on a subject, which is impacting our time. It will help them come to grips with the incredible changes, challenges and opportunities facing the church to reach a new generation with the unchanging Gospel.