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# DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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## The Dangers of Postmodernism

*Prof. Johan Malan,  
Mossel Bay, South Africa*

Ideologically and theologically the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by a sharp swing towards postmodernism. This school of thought gradually became established during the past two decades of the previous century but presently enjoys the support of millions of people all over the world. Postmodernism is the frame of mind and lifestyle of the fully liberated man who abandoned all ideologies, traditions and shackles which may in any way have impeded his freedom of thinking and acting. We have to gain clarity on the true nature of postmodernism as well as the most important dangers associated with it.

According to postmodernists the history of the world may, ideologically, be divided into the following three periods:

### Pre-modernism

That was the period of primitiveness when every tribe or nation had its own, traditional faith which was primarily based upon witchcraft, divination, ancestor worship and different forms of idolatry, as well as the mysticism of the Eastern religions. Most of the primitive people were illiterate, and during this time did not experience any noteworthy development in technology, medicine and other fields. Knowledge was limited and largely stagnated because it was not founded on research and was often associated with superstition.

### Modernism

This period in the world history was introduced by the establishment of the Christian faith in many parts of the world. The Christian calendar which started at the birth of the Lord Jesus was accepted everywhere and is an indication of the chronological development of the Christian civilization, which has become synonymous with modernism. Since its early expansion from

Jerusalem the Christian faith met with relentless opposition from heathen religions and a heathen world empire. Christianity was also considerably weakened when for its most part it fell under the control of the Roman Catholic Church. This situation gave rise to spiritual and academic stagnation during the dark Middle Ages.

It was not until the major spiritual awakening of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that world evangelism was done with great diligence and dedication. That gave rise to major expansion of the Christian church and laid the foundation for the Western Christian civilization. Significant technological development followed when people were liberated from superstition, while education up to the tertiary level became a priority in all developing countries.

Other ideologies also became established during the development phase of modernism, particularly capitalism, socialism and communism. Capitalism became a major driving force which led to the colonizing and modernizing of various Third World countries. Socialism motivated the establishment of communist dictatorships in many parts of the world.

### Postmodernism

The perplexing scientific and technological achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have gradually given rise to new ideological and religious views in the world. Because of their increased knowledge and skills people gained more power, they discovered more scientific explanations for human life and natural phenomena and in the process discovered solutions to most of their problems. Research became the key to new insights, knowledge increased exponentially and humanity started shaping their own world. In this new world people occupy a central position and become the masters of their own destiny.

A humanistic doctrine of self-redemption emerged from this man and knowledge oriented worldview since man started liberating himself from all ideologies in the modern era that impeded his freedom of thought and lifestyle. He consciously moved from the modern

to the postmodern period. But to be able to do this he had to discredit and abandon important characteristics of the modern era because they are too restrictive and prescriptive in nature. That gave rise to an extensive process of deconstruction.

The Christian religion is deconstructed for the following reasons:

- It leads to faith in a Supreme Being who has authority over people to determine the nature of their lives and also to eternally condemn them if they don't comply with divine precepts.
- It offers supernatural explanations to the origin of the world as well as all forms of life, and these explanations are contrary to the scientific findings such as the theory of evolution.
- It describes concepts such as heaven, hell and life after death, which are not scientifically verifiable.
- It pronounces unacceptable judgments upon most people, even Christians who entertain certain views that are at variance with the Bible.
- It portrays a very negative image of the non-Christian religions.
- It enforces a set of moral norms on people which restricts their freedom of choice, including their sexual orientation, and stigmatizes those who do not comply with these norms.
- It discourages people to only make use of psychological methods to solve deviate conduct, self-esteem problems and mental disorders.

It is for reasons such as these that postmodern man regards himself as post-Christian and post-theistic. Some of them completely reject Christianity and follow a secular lifestyle. Others follow the way of drastically reforming theology in order to subject it to their own views. To them, liberal churches and other religious meetings are used as forums for the further deconstruction of evangelical Christianity.

These reformers reduce the Bible to the level of a humanly conceived book permeated with contradictions. The transcendent God is robbed of His power and depicted as a pantheistic god who dwells in all people and also in nature. The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, His deity, resurrection from the dead and His ascension are denied, as well as the redemptive

value of His crucifixion. Prayer is replaced by Eastern meditation, while all forms of directive preaching from the Bible are banned and substituted by speculative discussions in which the credibility of the Bible is questioned. Meetings of this nature are the breeding-ground for postmodern agnosticism.

One of the views entertained by postmodern theologians of the New Reformation in South Africa is that a scientific worldview does not recognize the Biblical concepts of "above" and "under". According to them, there is no proof of the existence of a heaven and an underworld (hades or hell) - neither do they believe in a devil. The allegation is made that early Christianity was strongly influenced by the pre-modern superstition of the Middle East, from which it derived its ideas of the devil as dragon or snake that has a kingdom somewhere in the air. To them, this is only a myth.

The majority of postmodernists also reject the idea of life after death. They argue that when a person dies he merely returns to the dust from which he was made. His consciousness also ends at death. For this reason, human life should be considered on a horizontal level without any reference to a supernatural dimension which can anyway, according to them, not be verified scientifically. All beliefs to this effect are ascribed to the influence of a primitive, pre-modern worldview.

Apart from the fact that postmodern man abandons rigid religious ideas, he also abandons other institutions in society which regulate his behavior and restrict his freedom of choice. That includes political ideologies such as capitalism and communism, and for this reason postmodernism is in certain societies experienced as post-capitalistic, post-colonialist, or post-communistic. The democratic rights of liberated man should take absolute precedence and not be limited by any oppressive system.

Deconstruction is a key concept in postmodern reforms. The old order of human societies should completely vanish to make room for the new order of a free and united humanity. In modern legal systems these liberties are honored as the highest expressions of the constitutional rights of every individual.

## **A revolution against God**

Postmodernism is basically a revolution against the God of the Bible. His authority stands in the way of fallen humanity who wants to be in full control of its own affairs. People are no longer willing to comply with God's guidelines and want to be free to do as they please. In Psalm 2, in which the Kingship of the Lord Jesus on earth is confirmed, world leaders urge one another to reject this divine control and participate in a revolution against God and His Son:

“Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us” (Ps. 2:1-3).

This revolution has already progressed very far, as evidenced by the fact that Christian constitutions in which the supremacy of the Triune God is recognised, have become a rare phenomenon in the world. Because of this, state-subsidized Christian education is also a vanished phenomenon. In its place governments are offering secular or multi-religious education. The young generation increasingly grow up in a postmodern milieu in which they have virtually limitless freedom to order their lives morally, socially and religiously at will. Christian standards are regarded as obsolete or irrelevant and are defended and observed by very few members of the upcoming generation.

A further aspect of this revolution is the joint action by world leaders to liberate humanity in its entirety. The concept of globalism is clearly reflected by this joint action of theirs and alludes to a new world order. Humanity should be united politically, religiously and also in the economic sphere, as the highest expression of man's self-realization and dominion over the earth and its inhabitants. In this way they are building a modern tower of Babel.

## **Synthesis**

As the deconstruction of the old order gains momentum, a new social system emerges which is based upon synthesis. It amounts to an eclectic combination of views and practices from both the modern and pre-modern periods, while ideas from other religions may also be incorporated. There are

literally no limits to that which “liberated man” can reject and then accept in its place. It is no longer strange to hear that people are gay, are not interested in formal marriages, do not believe in the Bible or in God, and have decided to practice Buddhist or Hindu meditation techniques.

The people of Africa are also free to either practice ancestor worship from the pre-modern period, or one or other version of Christianity, or any of the non-Christian religions. They can also try to mix the various traditions. No pressure should be exerted on any person to conform exclusively to the principles of one or other system of faith.

## **Tolerance**

In the emerging societies a culture of mutual tolerance is promoted by not criticizing or impeaching anybody. Any act in this direction can be interpreted as hate speech and lead to civil or criminal prosecution. All people's freedom should be respected and one person's moral views on right and wrong should not be enforced upon others.

The only restriction imposed upon people in postmodern societies is that, through their actions, they should not harm or endanger other people and neither should they commit cruelty against animals. Peace, unity and harmony should be pursued as the highest ideals, also on the international level.

## **Salvation and punishment**

What does the Lord say about this revolution against Him and His Son, which has become a worldwide movement in the end-time?

“Then He shall speak to them in His wrath and distress them in His deep displeasure: Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are my Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled

but a little. Blessed are those who put their trust in Him” (Ps. 2:5-12).

God is a God of love and mercy. He decided to send His Son, incarnated as a lowly Servant, as Savior to a sinful world full of unrighteousness and violence. Before the birth of Jesus the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said about the Child: “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). “Jesus” means “the Lord is Salvation”. The Lord Jesus also came for other nations to seek and save those who were lost (Luke 19:10). For that reason He sent His disciples to the ends of the earth with the gospel of salvation (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). World evangelization is the great commission to the church during this age.

When all nations have heard the gospel and those who responded positively have been saved, Christ will return to take active control over the world: “After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins and I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things” (Acts 15:16-17). He will not return as a lowly Servant but as King of kings and Lord of lords with many crowns on His head (Rev. 19:11-16).

During the reign of the Lord Jesus on the throne of David there will be peace without end in the Middle East as well as the whole world (Isa. 9:6). Jerusalem will be called The Throne of the Lord, and all nations will be gathered to it to be taught by the Lord, and they will walk no more after the stubbornness of their evil heart (Jer. 3:17). The saved Israel will be greatly honoured by the nations who will regularly visit Jerusalem (Zech. 8:22-23). Former warlike nations will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and they will not learn war anymore (Isa. 2:2-4). Then only will all nations be part of Christ’s kingdom and live under His direct control. It is obvious that a rebellious humanity that refuses to accept the rule of Jesus will first have to be judged and stripped of their power and influence on earth before the kingdom of Christ can be fully revealed. It does not matter whether the enemies of God come from the non-Christian religions or whether they were influenced by non-Christian ideologies such as postmodernism to reject the Triune God – they are all rebels against the

Father and His Son and are bringing His judgments upon themselves.

From the description in Psalm 2 it is evident that the world leaders and judges referred to here have formerly recognized the authority of God and His Son, but subsequently rejected it in an outright and militant way. They say, “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us!” They are, therefore, self-declared postmodernists who turned their backs upon the Christian tradition and empowered themselves to live as they please.

People who despise God’s saving grace by rejecting the atonement which His Son so lovingly offers them, leaves the Lord no choice but to judge them. During the great tribulation God’s judgments will be poured out on the whole earth to destroy the sinners (Isa. 13:9-13; 24:1-23; Matt. 24:21; Rev. 19:15). This will also be a time of severe testing for wayward Israel as well as nominal or backslidden Christians (Jer. 30:7; Rev. 6:9). Will born-again Christians also be the objects of God’s wrath? Not at all! Like in the days of Noah and Lot, God will first remove the righteous from the disaster area of divine judgments and then pour out His wrath upon the rebels against His kingdom. The rapture is the way in which true believers will be removed from planet earth before the time of judgment (Luke 21:36; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). They are called blessed because they put their trust in the Son of God.

The present postmodern rebellion against God, His Son, His Word, and a Christian tradition of almost 2000 years, is the peak of end-time humanity’s spiritual foolishness and self-exaltation. They will only have themselves to blame when they fall into the hands of the living God and receive the righteous retribution for their spiritual treason. However, we are still in the age of grace and should not waste any time to get in the right relationship with God. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” It is immeasurably better to know Him as your Savior now, than facing Him one day as Judge and be condemned with all the unbelievers.

Dr. Malan is a retired professor from the University of the North in South Africa. He has a website with excellent materials that are easy to use for teaching a Bible Class. Check it out at:  
[www.bibleguidance.co.za](http://www.bibleguidance.co.za)

## The Truth With Brokenness

*“A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all” (2Timothy 2:23).*

This verse seems to contradict the fact that Jesus called the Pharisees a *“brood of vipers”* (Matthew 23:33), Herod *“that fox”* (Luke 13:32), and that He cleansed the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers.

These Scriptures are often used to support the malicious name-calling, animosity, insults and threats of those in apologetics-type ministries towards those in error. But do Jesus’ actions contradict Paul’s teaching, and do we have the right, even responsibility, to be aggressive and abrasive in our defense of the Truth?

First we have no instruction to act abusively, maliciously and uncouthly in our relating to others. In fact, we have clear instructions to *not* be malicious in our dealings, with even our enemies. Jesus said *“...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44). He also said we must turn the other cheek (Luke 6:29).

Paul teaches: *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse... repay no one evil for evil... do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:14,17,19-21).

Concerning potential teachers James says: *“Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh”* (James 3:10-12).

Peter reminds us that Jesus, *“when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously”* (1Peter 2:23).

Peter further instructs us: *“...not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing... Let him seek peace and pursue it... And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”* (1Peter 3:9,11,13,14).

The writers of the New Testament are agreed that our attitude towards those who are outside the faith, even our enemies and the enemies of the Gospel should be one of love. Clearly, we are not to fellowship with them nor invite them into our homes, let alone our churches (1Timothy 6:5, 2John 1:10). Yet, our attitude towards them should be one of love since we are not the ones who will execute judgment or vengeance.

There are no contradictions in the Scriptures and, therefore, Jesus could not have acted inconsistently with the clear teaching of the Bible or with His purpose.

Jesus’ actions are normally explained by the term *“righteous indignation”* or *“righteous anger.”* I am sure that is what it was. He was angry. When someone becomes angry there are two important considerations: The motive and the actions. Jesus’ anger was one hundred percent for the right reasons. His motives were not tinged by even the slightest bit of personal vendetta, pride, or any other wrong attitude. Neither did a single one of His actions not fully reflect the will of the Father.

So the questions we have to ask when we want to lash out at others who we think are heretics are:

1) Are my motives perfectly pure? Is there absolutely no sense of personal vendetta, trying to prove myself, pride, malice, nor any other motive that is contrary to the Word? Am I totally driven by a zeal for God’s house and the Truth? Or, is there something else behind my attitude?

2) Do I act exactly in obedience to the will of God? When saying what I say about the wolves, do I reflect the Father, and do I say and do only what He commands?

Friends, after many years of observing (and participating with) those who go on major rants and

tirades against the false teachers, I am convinced that the motive and the actions very seldom reflect the will of the Father, and that the tirades seldom glorify Him, but rather the speaker/writer.

Those of us who are defenders of the faith have two responsibilities in the area of false doctrine: Our first duty is to protect the sheep from error (Acts 20:28-31). Our second responsibility is to attempt to win the gainsayers (Titus 1:9, 2Timothy 2:25,26, Acts 18:21). (It seems that many are not doing either, but are rather trying to show how right they are and how wrong others are – for this they have no Biblical mandate.) We do not protect the sheep any better by ranting and raving. On the contrary, we make some folk wonder why we protest so much. We certainly do not win any heretics to the Truth by slander, name-calling and venom. Thus neither aspect of our purpose is served by antagonism and rough words.

Should we then *not* name names and expose those who lead weak disciples astray? No, we must name names. Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all named names. Every writer of the New Testament exposed error and warned against error. This is a very important part of the mission of any true teacher of Truth. Unfortunately, unless the names are mentioned, people often do not make the connection between the false doctrine and the face on the television.

Weak and new believers especially need to be given guidelines as to who is “kosher” and who is not. But, with what attitude do we name the heretics? Is it with glee and pride that we are not like so-and-so? Or is it with sorrow over the need to even have to mention another’s name in warning?

Matthew 23 is often quoted as an excuse to rail against others. In this chapter Jesus warns against the Pharisees, exposing them for all their falseness and error. Eight times he pronounces woe over them. He calls them whitewashed tombs, snakes, hypocrites, blind, fools and a few other things.

Yes, He did all that – *but* with what attitude? I have seen many men do what Jesus did in the first 36 verses of that chapter. I have even heard a few apply verses 38 and 39. But I have never seen one of these people do what Jesus did in verse 37 of the same chapter. He wept and lamented over the same men that He was

lambasting: “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*” (Matthew 23:37).

Many have styled themselves after the aggressive prophets of the Old Testament without bothering to see that the private moments of these brave men were filled with tears and heartache for the state of Israel.

Only when we are willing to season our insults with tears from a broken heart for the heretics do we have the right to say anything to them.

*An excerpt from a new booklet, now available, entitled Contentiously Contending by Pastor Anton Bosch*

## *Contentiously Contending*



Anton Bosch