



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophoria

Mapping Postmodernism

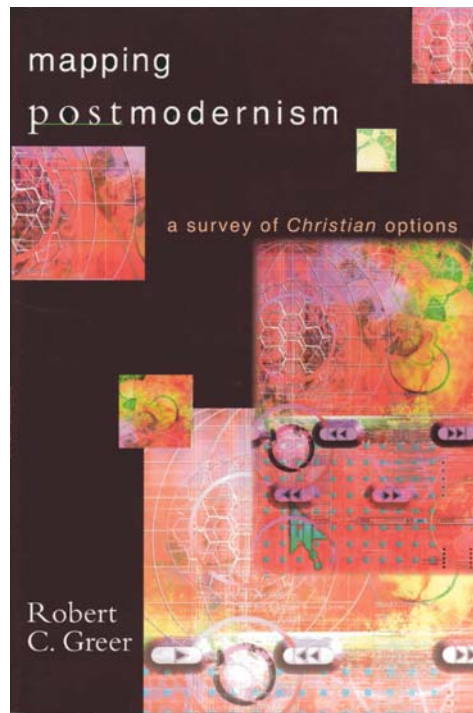
Robert C. Greer.

Postmodernism is a loaded word and many either embraces it or rejects it. How would Christians approach without falling into either extremes or even more, surpasses it through a biblical worldview?

Greer helps us navigate through the complex debate on how Christians respond to postmodernism. He begins with a chapter brilliantly called 'The dark side of absolute truth'. Though Greer affirms absolute truth as in the person of Jesus Christ, he uses the terms to typify Western culture since the Age of the Enlightenment, as *encyclopedic collection of abstracted principles that are understood to be timelessly valid and therefore immutable—not subject to change*.

He asserts that it is this dark side of 'absolute truth' that has given rise to the postmodern agenda. The way we do theology, both liberal and conservatives, have both approached from this fundamental assertion of 'absolute truth'. We have thus inherited and approach theology, and therefore, bible teachings, church, life, work etc stemming from this approach. This approach has a dark side that is largely ignored or unknown to us since we have been brought up in this way.

Major theologians have thus responded with alternate ways of approaching postmodernism represented by four theologians; Francis Schaeffer, Karl



Barth, John Hick and George Lindbeck.

'The fundamental problem with hermeneutics in its current state is the error of confusing finitude with infinitude. We noticed this error in the writings of both Augustine and Descartes, two ancient writers whose influence on the West has been enormous. Yet we, as creatures, are and will always be finite. When this fundamental insight is obfuscated in our theologies and theological reflections, we open the door to modernism and begin moving on a trajectory that takes us away from the very God who described our creaturehood as "very good" (Gen 1:31).'

This book is indeed a map for those of us who feel a little lost of multiple analyses of postmodernism and a biblical and faithful way forward.

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Of the Heart and Mind

A Matter of Perspective?

At display in Raffles City is an artwork by Spanish artist Issac Montoya. It is an artwork that is layered with several images and below is the one which we see with our naked eyes.



It looks like a collage of a person with his mouth open and looking upwards and a raccoon on the lower right hand corner. However, when you walk into one of the booths that was setup along the street, you will see something really different. The booth consist of a filter in just one color. It filters out the other colors and projects a different image and picture.



Here we see a lady with a very sad disposition and what seems like a child at the lower right hand corner. Through a lens, we see a totally different picture than without.

Through the blue filter of yet another booth, we see the same image presenting a very different picture, now of a man laughing and another man in the lower left hand corner.



I believe this piece of art represents in essence that of the postmodern mindset and worldview. The analogy is a great one. Each person, through their own cultural lens (or filters) sees the same picture in a particular way. Both believe and perceive their perspective to be true and correct. However, when they begin to communicate from each within their own worldview, they could not comprehend or 'see' the picture that the other person is seeing. People from each 'booth' then perhaps conclude that each 'truth' is then relative to the cultural filter that each person is seeing or experiencing.

The fallacy of the modern enlightenment is to assume that we can attain the 'God's eye', to see above and beyond our cultural perspective through the scientific or philosophical approach, not realizing that that in and of itself is cultural.

The swing of the pendulum to the other extreme is then to

deny any truth claims at all, that each persons' truth is relative to their own and therefore 'truth is relative'. But this argument is circular and self defeating as the assertion is an Absolute claim that 'Truth' is relative.

Are we then trapped in the booth of our culture and will never able to know? Human knowledge as James Sire asserts in one of his talks that I still remember, stems not only through logic and experience, but just as valid, also from revelation.

The way we can move beyond our cultural tower, as Crystal Downing writes, is to expand the tower of our culture to accommodate additional facts and a sincere discourse with other towers. In her comment on Chronicles of Narnia, Crystal writes, 'Lewis implies that truth is far more than abstract rational information; truth is relational, involving persons, human and divine, communing and communicating in dynamic interaction. In Prince Caspian, several children, skeptical about Aslan's presence, see him only after they listen to Lucy's testimony about where the lion is leading and, trusting her, start to follow. Once they act on Lucy's witness, Aslan becomes apparent to them: the blind can see.'

The Word (the way, the truth, the life) was made flesh and made His dwelling among us. As His body, the church should also be in the flesh, so that the Word be witnessed, that Truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eyes in a Darkened Room

Rashomon

Akira Kurosawa is a master story teller. In this intriguing movie, he has broken many of the taboos of his generation. This movie was made in the black and white era of 1950.

The film depicts the rape of a woman and the apparent murder of her husband through the widely differing accounts of four witnesses, including the rapist and, through a medium (Fumiko Honma), the dead man. The stories are mutually contradictory, leaving the viewer to determine which, if any, is the truth. The story unfolds in flashback as the four characters—the bandit Tajōmaru (Toshirō Mifune), the murdered samurai (Masayuki Mori), his wife (Machiko Kyō), and the nameless woodcutter (Takashi Shimura)—recount the events of one afternoon in a grove. But it is also a flashback within a flashback, be-

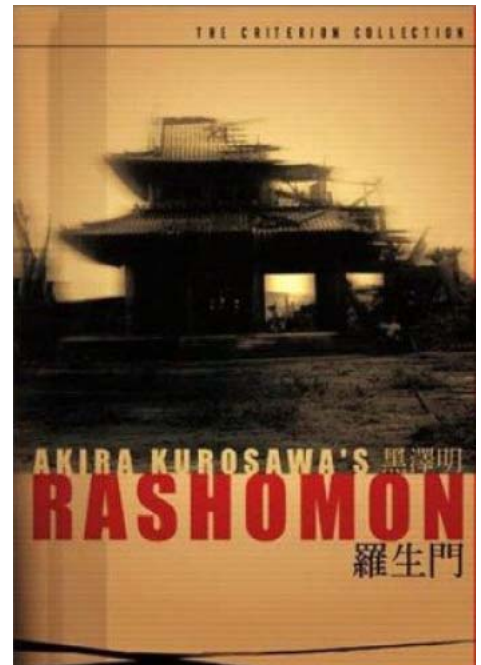
cause the accounts of the witnesses are being retold by a woodcutter and a priest (Minoru Chiaki) to a ribald commoner (Kichijiro Ueda) as they wait out a rainstorm in a ruined gatehouse. (from Wikipedia).

The woodcutter and priest were desperate to find hope after witnessing the happenings at the courthouse because of the conflicting views given by the witnesses and were themselves trying to find means to cling on to a hope that human kind can still have a glimmer of good in them in view of the self preserving testimonies.

Two themes run in the story; how evil can human-kind get and what is truth? These two themes are intricately intertwined in the witness accounts, playing the 'facts' to their own advantage.

In the post-modern era, Kurosawa seems prophetic in his art as such themes run fundamentally different from the society he is from. The reception of this movie was cold in Japan but elsewhere, it was a debut of this master movie maker's work.

As we see and experience terrorism in our 'brave new globalized world', we realize that self preservation as people and society, can and will drive folks into desperate measure, be it sheer preservation of our indulgence to pleasure, a sense of humiliation at the hands of militant or greater powers.



The multiplicity of perspectives and facts may sometimes seems too complex for an observer, in this case the commoner in the movie, to decipher what is 'really' true. It almost seems in our attempt to 'interpret' truth, that we also have to consider the whole realm of subjectivity known as motivation and intention. This leads to the question of 'Is there any truth?'

The basis of our search must begin with the understanding that there is a Truth that exists in all situations and worldviews. The law of non-contradiction applies in all situation and is therefore not bias. It is rather how we are able to see through our own subjectivity and biases, so as to arrive at a better understanding of this Truth. The assertions that "There is no truth" or all "All truth are relative or cultural" are themselves, self-



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**Kingdom Building
at the Workplace**

Coming Events

For more information check our web-site.

19 Sep – GCF Annual Dinner
Christian Disciplines in Times of
Economic Challenges
NUSS Kent Ridge Guild House



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