

## POSTMODERNISM (and Modernism) IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE (Appendix: Words and Images)

Some people, perhaps especially postmodern people, do better with fragments and images than with detailed exposition. It is for such people that I offer the table below as a partial summary of ideas from this course. Things that characterize modernism (and much of the modern church) are in the first column. The second column contains characteristics of postmodernism in its more extreme forms, which we might call “hard” postmodernism. Then the third column (which is not placed between the other two because it is not a *via media*) is some “third way” ideas. The lines between the columns are dotted, recognizing that most of these distinctions are shades of gray rather than simple black and white.

<b>Modernism (incl. much of conservative Evangelicalism)</b>	<b>(Hard) Postmodernism</b>	<b>Third Way</b>
All about the reasoning, consuming individual	We choose and consume things to construct our lives	Maybe it isn't about consumption
Individualized religion “me and Jesus”	Individualized religion “what feels right for me”	Maybe it isn't about me
Foundationalism (self-evident truths, human reason)	No basis to believe anything	Coherentism, Web of belief (maybe some anchor points)
Truth should be self-evident, same for everybody	All is my/your interpretation, so no universal truth	Some interpretations are better than others
Only propositional and scientific truth count	Can't get to truth, at least not universal truth	Truth also found relationally, in community, in story
Knowledge like a sturdy, fixed fortress or tower (Babel?)	Seeker of knowledge must be a perpetual drifter, wandering without commitment	Seeking knowledge a journey, not pointless but toward a destination
Knowledge held with certainty	Can't be certain, so can't really know anything	Humility required, but even without certainty can have enough clarity to make commitments
Naïve realism	Constructed reality	Critical realism
Black and white	Kaleidoscope	Shades of gray, maybe depending on perspective
Grand totalizing stories (metanarratives)	All human stories suspect, only local stories matter	Maybe there's a grand story but it's not just a human one
Systematic theology	All systems are oppressive	Theology can be relational, narrative, in community
Scripture as source to mine for system of timeless truths	Why should we listen to those particular texts?	Scripture as story of God's ongoing mission, guidance for our role in story
Fixed doctrine, police the boundaries	Postmodern “spirituality” with no boundaries	Center on Christ, worry less about boundaries
Gospel as information	Who needs a gospel?	Gospel as relationship and transformation
Strong faith requires certainty	Certainty impossible, so faith is impossible	Doubts and questions OK; faith as trust in relationship