

REVIEW OF DAVID S. DOCKERY (ED.)
THE CHALLENGE OF POSTMODERNISM

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This paper reviews *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, David S. Dockery's collection of twelve articles addressing a Christian perspective on postmodernism. Beginning with a description of postmodernism as an assault on the notion of objective truth through a subjective interpretation subject to personal interpretation, Dockery points out that some forms of postmodernism question even the possibility of any ultimate truth. He also points to the demise of modern thinking that has caught up many within the Church as a good thing for the Church, since modern thought was a human centered, rationalistic system which had no place for God or the supernatural.

Evangelical Christians believe that such a notion as ultimate truth exists, that there really is a "God Who is There," to refer to Francis Schaeffer's title, who can only be known through supernatural revelation in the Bible. Christian thinkers need to go beyond the modern thinking that eliminated the supernatural from life, and the postmodern thinking that places human interpretation of texts and experiences and creation of personal meaning as the final arbiter of a relative truth for each person individually, to a "paleo-orthodoxy," a return to revealed truth in the tradition of the Scriptures and the early patristic writings.

Carl F. H. Henry points out that "The modern era sought to liberate humanity from ... existence in a God ordered universe" (Dockery, p. 36), and that Christians who believe in ultimate truth are despised in an academia which has moved toward relativity and subjectivity. William Brown concludes that as Christians seek to apply biblical truth to a "video-dependent society," Christians must start where the people they are trying to reach actually are, not with an appeal to revealed truth, but to the teachings of Scripture to win the right to be heard through a life-style of love and compassion, which creates a desire on the part of a watching world to have what we have, allowing the Truth, Jesus Christ

Himself to live through us, as the center of our lives. James White extends that to an appeal for a relevant witness through personal relationships, through friendship evangelism, emphasizing a practical Christianity. Thomas Oden concludes with a call to a reinvigorated “Christian realism grounded in paleo-orthodox social values” (p. 183), a return to the premodern roots of a Christianity founded in the truth of God revealed in Scripture.

References

Dockery, D. S., (ed.). (2001). *The challenge of postmodernism: an evangelical engagement*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.