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### Christian Religious Education and Post Modernism in Nigeria

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#### Abstract

Postmodernism as an intellectual movement was born as a challenge to several modernist hthemes that were first articulated during the enlightenment. These include scientific positivism, the inevitability of human progress and the potential of human reason to address any essential truth of physical and social conditions and thereby make them amenable to rational control. This paper sets out to explore how the challenges presented by postmodernism might influence and shape the Christian proclamation. The study adopted secondary data as a method drawn from an array of published and unpublished materials relevant to the study. These include Books, Journals, Magazines, Conference Papers, Newspapers encyclopaedias and the internet. The result of findings revealed that postmodernism rejects a standard for good and evil which stands above the created world and human life. Yet, the Biblical teaching repeatedly attests to human responsibility. The paper concludes that postmodernism is an attack on objective truth characterized by broad Scepticism, Subjectivism, a general Suspicion of reason; an acute Sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power. The study recommends that the national educational goals, derived from Nigeria's philosophy of education as enshrined in the National Policy of Education should be active, Teachers at all levels must inculcate national consciousness and national unity.

**Keywords:** *Christian Religious Education, Education Modernism, Postmodernism*

## Introduction

Postmodernism arose from the ashes of modernism, an era which gave prominence to reason and which hypothesizes that absolute knowledge could be gained through the human mind, and that this would consequently enhance intrinsic goodness. (Conclaves 2005). Five possible reasons for the rise of postmodernism are: the loss of faith in the Enlightenment after world war 1, the success of the modern era, the

critique of modernity's hermeneutics of suspicion which, questioned "all traditional ideologies" and sought for certain universal truths based on positivism", Modernity's weak emphasis on ethics and the purpose of knowledge that modernity promoted; and the changes in modernity itself leading to uncertainty and insecurity. (Hiebert 2008).

The postmodern worldview therefore, could be described as an

intellectual mood, a set of contemporary cultural expressions that challenge the main beliefs, values and principles of the modern world view indicating the end of a single universal, all encompassing worldview. The main trust of this paper is to explore how the challenges presented by postmodernism might influence and shape the Christian proclamation of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who must find new ways to creatively and effectively communicate his person and work within a Post-Modern Framework.

### **Christian Religious Education**

Christian Religious Education we must realize emerged as a subject of prime importance and teachings in Primary schools in Nigeria in the first half of the nineteenth-century when the Christian missionaries established the first schools in Badagry in 1842. Its value in the school curriculum is unique among other subjects. This form of education spread to the North in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was taught in the schools at the early period by the Christian missionaries (Methodist, Church Missionary Society (CMS), and Roman Catholics), who were the proprietors of the schools and considered CRK as an important subject to be taught in schools. Since then, Christian Religious education has occupied a prominent position in Nigerian school curriculum till date. (Onovughe 2008).

In recognition of the value attached to the subject, it was not only offered in the primary schools alone but

also at all levels of institutions in Nigeria, not only as a subject to learn, but also as a way of life. As to whether the teaching of this subject has made the desired impact on the moral, spiritual and mental growth of the students who learn it and on the Nigerian society as a whole or not is beyond the scope of this paper. Christian Religious Education gives moral training and emphasizes on the need for discipline in society. It educates the citizenry on the need to do good and be virtuous and also inculcates moral and spiritual values in human relations. It is through the teaching of Christian Religious Education that the code of conduct, civil obligations and civic rights required for the stability of the society would be inculcated in the Nigerian citizenry.

The tool which Christian Religious Education uses in the Bible, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which gives people direction on how to relate with one another as well as with the Supreme Being-God. It tells us clearly that God is eternally one and as the living and Sovereign One, he differs fundamentally from all false "gods" (Deuteronomy 6:4f; Psalm 115:3-7; Isaiah 44:6; Jeremiah 10:6; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6). The uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, demands a response. The necessity of personal belief, of placing one's faith in this unique One, is at the heart of the Christian gospel. Christ fulfils and completes all the aspirations of humanity. He comes as the second Adam to recreate sinful humanity and a broken world.

The Bible affirms that God is sovereign over history. He calls his people to communicate the gospel in their particular cultural context. Each generation uniquely engages its contemporaries with the Bible's message, both in word and deed. We are messengers of God's salvation to humankind and we are required to understand the cultural setting in which we live. Effective communication in culture is a challenge. In many respects, believers at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century found themselves in a shrinking world, where people, in radically different geographical and socioeconomic settings nonetheless, experienced the effects of common cultural features. This context is being increasingly referred to as "postmodern" culture, a significant worldview shift.

### **Post Modernism**

Defining postmodernism is a difficult process between the term can be used differently between disciplines to understand the word; it might be helped to break it down. Historically when the word 'modern' was used in a philosophical context, it referred to a worldview based on the principles of the enlightenment. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the enlightenment emphasized the autonomy of the individual, trust in the power of the reason, conviction that human reason is objective and that truth can be discovered by the rational human mind. (Benson 2001) The 'modern' mindset valued scientific investigation, absolute truth, logical and pragmatic organizations and orderly soundings

(Verth 1994). For this reason; long established institutions that were deeply rooted in society, such as religion and the government began to be questioned.

There was a new and greater emphasis being placed on man's ability to reform the world by his own thought by scientific investigation and scepticism. Someone might think, "well what is wrong with that? What is wrong with using your mind and using science to determine what is true or false? Please understand the Bible is not necessarily against using our minds –it simply recognizes the limitations of human thought, God himself says, "come now, and let us reason together; says the Lord (Isaiah 1:18) even the casual reader of scripture is familiar with the Apostle Paul who when Evangelizing the lost people would "reason from the scriptures the truth concerning Jesus Christ (Acts 17:3, 18:4) God made us with minds, and in the commandments that the Lord referred to as the greatest of all the commandments. He said, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Mathew 27:23).

### **Background of Postmodernism**

To adequately address post-modernism, we must first know what modernism is. This is because modernism predates postmodernism and as a matter of fact postmodernism is a reaction to the shortcomings of modernism. The term 'Postmodern' itself applies to a variety of philosophical perspectives, mindsets, orientations and moods, spearheaded by, the gang of Six

namely Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and Rorty who shaped its main thinking.

Modernism was characterized by individualism and tended to replace the strong sense of community that was characteristic of the pre-modern world: 'I'll do my own thing in my own way irrespective of what anyone else thinks or says. It emphasized the primacy of instrumental reason that is the kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end without also taking into account the moral implications. This has a significant negative impact on the Christian faith where life in community is central to the understanding of discipleship and where God's communicating response. This mentality has been a particular challenge to a religious belief system built round a community. Etymologically, "postmodern" 'comes after' the modern. That is why it is a 'post'. In the past, when one tells you, you are so 'modern', it means that you are so fashionable, up to date, trendy, contemporary. With post modernism, however, if someone tells you that you are so 'modern', it is not a compliment. That means you are outdated, outmoded, out of trend, OT (Old Testament), or in the internet language of online chat rooms—"off topic". Ironically, to live in the contemporary (the original meaning of modern) is no longer to be 'modern' but to be postmodern.

Postmodern exposes the modern myths of exhaustive knowledge and

human progress. It is radically sceptical about human ability to apprehend knowledge and regards the claim to progress knowledge as an attempt to gain power. Postmodernism reintroduces the possibility of spiritual realities and influence while at the same time possessing much scepticism for a God who is personal, sovereign, and active in the human situation. Christian faith affirms a personal transcendent God.

As such, postmodernism rejects a standard for good and evil which stands above the created world and human life. Yet, Biblical teaching repeatedly attests to human responsibility. Helpfully, though, postmodernism reveals how many moral and ethical assertions (including some done in the name of Christianity) have been used as mechanisms of power, manipulation, and oppression, thus dehumanizing people. Postmodernism denies the existence of a met narrative, which gives life meaning and history a purpose.

Christian theism has a propositional structure, that is, a system of beliefs based on a number of propositions such as God's existence and the Bible being free from all errors, etc. These propositions form the inherent foundation from which the skilled theologian constructs doctrines and other complex theological assertions.

The pre-modern mindset believes that absolute truth is achievable because God reveals it so. Such a worldview was

prevalent in the medieval times, in most of the Christian tradition where all things lead to God as the sole authority of reality. This belief was debunked during the modern times when, in the Enlightenment, people began to question both authority and tradition, and the so-called objective truth that it proclaims. In its stead, it trusts human reason and science. Objectives truth is found on empirical facts, not on God. Modernity places its hopes in the capacity of human reason to be able to know truth. While in the medieval times, theology/religion was the queen of sciences, in modern times, it was science. In a way, all needed to be 'scientific'. This is a rejection of the Christian faith which had led to a rejection of everything supernatural. The result is a secular mindset, highly sceptical towards revelation and miracles and therefore highly sceptical towards the Biblical material. Modernism affirms the validity and necessity of reason. It affirms the positive progress in areas of sciences, medicine, technology, etc.

Furthermore, it affirms the developments leading to freedom, democracy and the emphasis of the dignity of every individual human being. It sees all of these as ultimately an outworking of the Biblical teaching about human beings as God's images and God's stewards. At the same time, it rejects the ideas, so fundamental to the autonomy and the sufficiency of reason and the ultimate rejection of God. Human beings are more than their minds and reality is more than this world.

## **Characteristics of Postmodernism and Christian stance**

Although, it is difficult to pin down exactly what "Postmodernism" is, the most widely adopted definition was the one by Francois Lyotard who defines it "as incredulity toward metanarratives." He argues that though the era was characterized and grounded in a position of truth and scientific fact, yet facts change from time to time, hence there is no metanarrative. (Lyotard 1993). McCallum also defined postmodernism, as it applies to everyday lives, as the death of truth as we know it. (McCallum, 1996)

For (McGowan, 1991), it is a "culture characterized by despondency and despair" "repudiation of universals, and abandonment of appeals to reason and a rejection of modernism claims. Other terms that are used interchangeably to represent postmodernism include "deconstructionism," "post-structuralism," "metanarrative" "authorial-authority" and "thick narrative" or narrative". Essentially, it is a philosophy which believes that truth is unknowable and does not exist. Truth is not universal but relative and it is viewed and defined by each culture. Postmodernists most often replace the word "truth" with words like "perspectives," "constructs" or "point of view." In essence, postmodernists claim that human beings cannot presume to know what is true, but the best that one can do is to describe how various entities perceive the world.



Postmodernists perceive human nature as ambivalent and human moral action as contingent upon prevailing situations. (Gosnell 1995). Postmodernism is best defined through its characteristics which include:

- i. **Denial of Absolute truth and replacement with relativism:** The universe is believed not to be “mechanistic” and “dualistic”, but historical, relational, and personal. Postmodernists argue that since there are myriad of points of view, there are necessarily a myriad of truths. This abandonment of the belief in universal truth and the advocacy of a plethora of truths necessarily entails the loss of a “definite” and “final” arbiter or criteria with which to evaluate various and often conflicting interpretations of truth and reality.
- ii. **Denial of “all-encompassing”, “universal” explanation:** In postmodern thinking emphasis shifts to “local” and the “particular”. Everyone is at liberty to construct his/her own truth. It is a matter of perspective. No point of view is supreme, in an era of information overloaded with plurality of voices vying for the right to reality, to be postmodern is to receive “myriads of what is “to be” and so with each invitation “to be” one begins to doubt the “authenticity” of other invitations. Therefore, “openness” and “tolerance” to conflicting information is a catch word in postmodernism.
- iii. **No fixed Anchors in Values and Morality.** Closely related to the first two characteristics of postmodernism in the fact that each individual and society is left to construct his/her own values. People have to make their way without fixed reference to and traditional anchoring points. As a result of bewildering instability and rapid instability, knowledge is constantly changing and meaning flits. (Usher and Edwards, 1994). According to Crossan (1975), moral absolutes have evaporated, “there is no lighthouse keeper” neither is there any lighthouse, no dry land, there are “only people living on rafts made from their imagination.” Humans now became the measures of all things.
- iv. **Dissolution of Grand Narratives:** Postmodernists are critical of all grand stories of the past and the attendant shortcomings such as the grand story of creation, sin, fall and redemption and consummation espoused in the Bible, and the grand story of a Marxist Utopia and its collapse along with the Berlin Wall; the challenger explosion in spite of technological progress; the promise of social cohesion and the economic buoyancy under democratic capitalism and the unfortunate economic collapse; the ecological threat and the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor; postmodernists therefore, came to a firm insistence that these stories that have shaped our lives are stories of slavery, oppression and violence. Each individual and

society must develop their own stories based on their experiences and stop relying on the faulty past to shape the future.

### **Some Illustrations of Postmodernism and Social Issues**

Philosophy and worldviews are not just issues that people think about and use to formulate Christian theology. Worldviews ultimately affect individuals and society at large. The following three issues are basically the result of postmodern thinking—a thinking that says there is no objective truth.

**(a) Abortion:** Abortion is the termination of the life of a developing child in the womb. Spontaneous abortion refers to a naturally terminated pregnancy and is normally a “miscarriage.” The issue that we are concerned about here is an induced and deliberate termination of a normal pregnancy. Although abortion has historically been considered evil, people have been aborting babies for centuries. In the United States, laws related to abortion have traditionally been state laws rather than federal laws. However, in 1973, in the landmark Supreme Court decision *Roe vs. Wade*, the US Supreme Court declared that a woman had the right under certain conditions to abort a viable fetus with her body. Millions of abortions in America have seen the result. The pro-abortion proponents have been able to make this a women’s rights issue. The morality of the act was not really an

issue but totally determined by the pregnant mother and her health provider. Women must have the same right that men have. Traditionally men have been able to have sex with little or no personal consequences to themselves. It is the woman who experienced the consequences of a life-changing pregnancy and a lifetime of motherhood. This was felt to be inherently unfair to women. To try to help gain equality with men, two things were done to give women greater control over their sexuality and thus their lives and future. First, the “pill” was developed (along with other birth control methods) which was a medicine that was given to women that would keep them from getting pregnant. Unfortunately, not everyone had access to such contraceptives or used them properly so millions of people continued to experience unwanted pregnancies. Therefore, the society legalized the termination of a pregnancy could now enjoy the same freedoms as men and could develop careers and do other things that heretofore had been difficult if not impossible. Since there are no absolute truths, if a woman determined that abortion was OK for her, then that was what she should do. The society had been so saturated with the postmodern philosophy of everyone doing what is right in their own eyes that abortion was the logical outcome of the legitimate quest to establish women’s rights that would be equal

to those of mean. And in so doing, scores of pages of divine revelation, thousands of years of human nature and the instinctive protection of motherhood were completely ignored and rejected. (<https://en.wikipedia.org>. Accessed 10 July 2024)

**(b) Homosexuality:** It would appear that if anything is straightforward in this earth, even apart from any supernatural revelation, it is the fact that the purposes and practice of sex is clear.

- Sex is essential for procreation. Two men or two women can never produce a child. It takes one of each to produce offspring.
- All of nature works the same way. The male is attracted to the female and the female is attracted to the male and that is what brings them together to produce offspring.
- This practice fits well with human psychology. Love that ultimately leads to the sexual act is not only an act of procreation but it is experience that is enjoyable and humanly fulfilling.
- This is the way it has been done for as long as anyone can remember.

Obviously there have occasionally been exceptions. I am not sure that I have ever witnessed such a thing but some have observed male animals trying to mount other male animals. However, we have always seen this as an aberration—exceptional behaviour that is completely abnormal that was triggered by some physiological or psychological accident in

development. In addition there is good evidence even from ancient history that homosexuality was occasionally practiced. Nero, one of the Roman emperors who ruled during the New Testament times, practiced homosexuality with a male consort named Sporus, which some believe he eventually “married”. There were even laws controlling homosexuality in the Roman Empire. However, this was the decadent period of the Roman Empire and not normal behaviour. Throughout human history, such activities have been considered deviant and not in the best interest of humanity of the individuals who practiced them (<https://virtueonline.org>. Accessed 10 July 2024)

Unfortunately, in our modern world, there has been a return to these deviant Roman practice but with modern philosophical underpinnings. There is the belief that there is no inherent eternal objective truth that says heterosexuality is better than homosexuality seems good to you, then you should practice it and no one should ever criticize you because there is no basis for criticism since there is nothing like objective truth that says heterosexuality is right and homosexuality is wrong.

**(c) Transgenderism:** If you thought that the practice of a mother killing her unborn or a person marrying someone of the same sex was bizarre, postmodernism has even created a stranger phenomenon and that is the failure to recognize something so objectively obvious as male and female.



From a physical point of view and from a historical point of view and certainly from a Biblical point of view, there is nothing more straightforward and true as human sexuality—the division of all human beings into male and female. In fact, Genesis 1:27 states, “so God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). This is one of the first statements about human beings in the Bible.

### **Biblical Response to Postmodernism**

The key issue related to Christians and postmodernism is the issue of truth. Douglas Groothuis summarizes this simply by saying, “Postmodernism, broadly understood, has dispensed with Truth and has replaced it with truths. (Groothuis 2000) in other words, the absolute truths that have historically been understood as emanating from divine revelation and careful observation of the universe have been replaced by the feelings, thought and ideas that each person has and believes and are thus understood as personal truth. Truth is not what is eternally correct but whatever I consider to be acceptable to me.

The Bible addresses this issue many different ways, starting with the word of Jesus who said “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6), suggesting that Jesus was truth personified. Everything he believed, everything he practiced, and everything he taught was absolutely truth. In fact, earlier Jesus had expressed this in practical terms when he said, “if you hold

to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Truth has the practical value of delivering people from various forms of bondage.

- The truth about reading opens the eyes of people to learn many other truths.
- The truth about aerodynamics frees people to be able to travel from Jos to Lagos in one hour rather than about 15 hours driving or perhaps three weeks walking.
- The truth about light waves and electronics has made it possible for me to sit at a table in Atlanta Georgia and teach my MA students in Jos Nigeria and be seen and heard live. We have been set free to some extent from the problems of time and distance.

Near the end of the book of Judges we read: “in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6 KJV). When there is no objective standard or authority like a king to determine what is right and wrong, people just do what they want because their interpretation of truth is as good as anyone’s. The Old Testament is full of statements about truth. Proverbs 22:22 is a sample: “the LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth” (Proverbs 12:22).

Groothuis makes this interesting observation:

Every member of the Trinity is closely associated with the truth in the New Testament. In praying for his disciples, Jesus says, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (Jn 17:17). The gospel is sometimes called “truth of Christ” (2 Cor 11:10). The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of truth” (Jn

14:7; 15:26 or simply “the truth” (1 Jn 5:6). Groothuis (2000)

Paul in his application of Jesus’ teachings about objective truth shows how essential truth is in Romans 1. Note these key verses:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, **who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, since **what may be known about God is plain** to them, because God has made it plain to them. **For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen**, being understood from what has been made, **so that people are without excuse**. **For although they knew God**, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but **their thinking**

This section tells us that a part of wickedness is suppressing the truth. It also says that God created certain things that are plain and clear like mothers protecting infants, the real purpose of sex and the identity of the gender of a person. Even a small child would understand these things. The passage also states that the thinking of such people become futile or empty and their hearts become darkened. This is obviously a figurative way of stressing their ignorance or loss of truth. God also gave them over to the sexual desires. That means God removed the truth to them and gave them the privilege of believing what they wanted. In fact, God allowed them to “*exchange the truth about God for a lie*.” This led them to commit homosexual acts and be convinced they were doing the right thing. They drifted so far from the truth that they did not think it was “*worthwhile to retain the knowledge (or truth) of God*” so “*God gave them over to a depraved mind*” which means that they could no longer think clearly.

become futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore **God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity** for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **They exchange the truth about God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, **God gave them over to shameful lusts**. Even their women exchanged **natural sexual relations for unnatural ones**. In the same way **the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another**. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as **they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God**, so **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness. (Romans 1:18-31).

These verses reflect God’s perspective on truth.

Even after looking at just a few scriptures related to truth, few could argue that the Bible does not present anything less than the comprehensive and consistent view that truth is important to God and therefore should be equally important to us. We are teachers of the Bible. Therefore, we must commit ourselves to learning the truth, teaching the truth, promoting the truth and defending the truth.

### Post modernity and Dominant Educational Models

The question is: how does the postmodern talk on the youth today affect the way we do education in Nigeria? Gone are the days when education is seen as handing over of certain truths with secure foundations backed up by solid traditions. Like the grand stories, the foundations are put into question. In our times, teachers are

not the only source of knowledge. Facebook, Google and Yahoo compete with the teacher—and most often puts their position into question. Those among us who were used to speaking “*ex cathedra*” feel lost. We are not used to making the paths as we walk. We have trained to know where we are going and the steps to get there. How does this impact on our educational philosophies? While at the outset we acknowledged that we are not an authority on curriculum development, this is because the Nigerian educational scene is happily moving from the content entered to student-centred educational models. We now talk about “educational and learning outcomes” not so much about “inputs” and syllabus coverage.

In a sense, this is a positive development. For a classroom teacher, it tells us that we do not have the monopoly of knowledge that needs to be handed down. It is the student and his needs for the future that is central to the educational process. And as I teach I should be clear about the specific and measurable learning outcomes I have laid down for them in my course. Our learning strategies have become varied and flexible with only one intention—that our students achieve the standards set so that they will be competitive in the future. But, “who formulates the outcomes? Who are setting the standards? Should all the standards be measurable?”, these questions are crucial because we are back to a very modern model of educational programming, planning, centralization and system-building. For instance, how can the

human virtues of imagination, critical sense, aesthetic sensibility, discernment, creativity, ethical sense be measured? In fact, teaching them could hardly be programmed. It can only be born out of dialogical learning between the teacher and the student in a specific learning context. Our purpose is laudable: that the students land in a job after their graduation. Everyone should be competitive for that. So, is education producing people for the multinational corporations? No wonder, we are teaching English for ‘global competitiveness’. Think about call centres!

Gone are the days when “English and Literature” were core courses for social criticism. We are not only talking about English but also of engineering, nursing and what have you. In this context, education thus becomes an obedient servant of corporations and multinational companies who dictate to us what kind of young Nigerians we need to produce for them. But are we not duped to think that we are espousing postmodern flexible alternatives in the educational curriculum but without our knowledge, a new metanarrative has entered through the back door, that of global capitalism. Why are these questions crucial for us? It is because we have in mind the millions of children who could no longer compete from the start, by their social location, they are already disqualified from the race of global competition from the start. We are thinking of many schools in our country who in order to teach computer have to make do with cardboard models

for keyboards. We are thinking of the many teachers whose salaries could not even sustain their basic needs.

### **Post modernity and Religious Education**

First, in our cyber age, we see that our youth are in love with stories, in postmodern language, narratives. But the more I preach, the more I discover that it is not our youth but adults, too. Maybe abstract thinking is only a plague of the Western mind. Nigerians do not understand abstract concepts; they love personal testimonies, stories of witnesses, fables. However, unlike the long and winding stories of our grand fathers, young people today only tell in fragments, little stories. What relevance does this have for us? For religious teachers among us here, we already have model—the parables of Jesus. Short stories of Life, not long discourses. So, Jesus is a postmodern guy after all. His parables are mini-narratives that open up the closed lives of others to newer and better horizons. Unlike modern grand stories that dominate and kill others, parables are open narratives—one that transform both the audience and the storyteller.

After hearing a parable, no one leaves unaffected, including Jesus. Remember the Syro-phoenician woman who answered Jesus about dogs and scraps from the masters' table? That woman successfully challenges and he commends her for it. (Mark 7:24-30) What do Christian teachers learn from here: that our narratives should be open

so much so that as we tell our Christian story, it is also ready to be interrupted by the stories of the "other" who is different from us. We cannot remain unaffected when we try to consider the "other" as real persons whom we care about. In order to bring home my point, let me just share a true story. The Daughters of Charity in Indonesia decided to serve the poor in a particular village after the Tsunami in 2004. They decided to build a hospital there to be of help to the victims. The village was almost 100% Muslim. When they asked the local government for permission, they found out that if they want to build a hospital, they also need to build a mosque. That was a great dilemma for the Catholic sisters.

Spending their money for the health of poor Muslims is not a problem. But a Mosque? But since they felt that the situation really called them to be there, they agreed to build a mosque in the centre of the hospital facility (while for their chapel, the assigned a little room along one of the hospital corridors). Today, the mosque has become the centre of worship where both their staff and patients can rest and pray. A sign of a Christian narrative totally open to the "other".

The second point is ethics. What do we need to do? As we have seen, postmodernity is characterized by mobility, fluid identities, liquidity. Thus, young people are open to new ideas, cultures, and experiences. But since they are so mobile, you can hardly pin them down. No commitments, no social

agenda, no talks of justice and equality. You hardly hear that from students today. Everyone is busy clicking the playful images of hypermodernity. It is here that the Christian tradition can exercise its prophetic function. We need to do something beyond passing photos of misery and calamities online. For sometimes, even online advocacies for the farmers, for ecology or for whatever, remain just as they are—digital bites! (Gotan, 2019) Sometimes, we are lured to thinking we are helping change the world only to realize that the virtual is not the real. Naked are clothed, the imprisoned are freed.

## Conclusion

This study has been able to highlight certain shifts in the conception of philosophers, scientists, and theologians in relation to the nature of truth as well as the best method of ascertaining truth. It has also revealed to us methods espoused over the centuries on the ways and manner of determining truth, which range from rationality, revelation, intuition, objectivity, empiricism, mysticism, and most recently deconstructionism or postmodernism. Moreover, we in the postmodernists' philosophical thought that came into the intellectual landscape at the turn of the twenty first century was a reaction to the failure of modernism to bring about a state of utopia.

Postmodernists' paradigm is characterized by the denial of absolute truth, because truth to postmodernists is

defined by each person; truth is relative and not universal. They object to the notion of worldview that is coherent or a field of knowledge that is unified. Their attention shifts from epistemological objectivity to subjectivity and from absolutes to relativism. There is no overarching and coherent worldview to guide human beings themselves. Each person is free to live a life in the expediency of its invention and understanding without the epistemological reference anchor relating to the universal. In contrast to postmodernists' view however, Christian educators must live, speak and teach with certainty and conviction of the imperative and primary of having the Scriptures as the legitimate moral guide, and also as an objective epistemological starting point that provides answers to all of life, not simply scientific, technology, economy and religious life. Biblical revelation provides the solution to postmodernism and forms the assurance of a unified field of knowledge.

Christians must identify common points of agreement and use them as starting points for dialogue and intellectual engagement. Christian religious educators cannot escape being influenced by the culture in which they live. They must be, "critical dialogue partners to another who will sieve the tenets of postmodernism through the prism lens of the Bible—the absolute truth, the final authority and final arbiter on matters of life and living.



The national educational goals, which are derived from Nigeria's philosophy of education as enshrined in the National Policy of Education, should be active. Teachers at all levels 'must inculcate national consciousness and national unity; the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society'.

History accounts help a nation to learn from the past, live rightly in the present, and confidently and intelligently project for the future. Every institution at all levels should have history week, whereby grand stories and metanarratives will be told over again, thus deconstructing the disintegrative ideology of postmodernism.

Teachers should embark on vigorous research to identify indicators that can help make Nigeria remain an indissoluble nation. Christian history teachers must constantly reinforce the fact that God is the Lord of history and thereby constantly proclaim the liberating story of God's creation, fall and redemption, and the hope of the coming king to reward evil doers.

Christian teachers and workers in Christian institutions must live and teach students how to develop a Christian worldview and then interpret all of life from the lens of that worldview. This attempt will help protect Christian education from the assault of postmodern influences. Christian students will then be able to think integratively and coherently on weighty

issues of life, anchoring all decisions on the infallible word of God.

Christian educators should help students to acquire the techniques of identifying faulty assumptions, which, if not challenged can invariably lead to faulty word views. Routine seminars and workshop should be organized for teachers on the art and science of discovering faulty assumptions. To effectively reach the emerging postmodern generation, Christians must return to the basics: living out biblical principles in plain view of the unchurched people in the community, developing authentic friendships and caring for the practical needs of people.

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