AN APOSTOLIC APPROACH FOR THE EVANGELIZATION
OF POSTMODERN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ established the mission of the church through His command in Acts 1:8. This command to “testify to what they had seen, heard, and known of Him . . . is the principal task of every Christian.”¹ To face the enormity of the task and the obstacles within the culture, Jesus promised power through the Holy Spirit sufficient for the fulfillment of the mission.² As it was for the early church, so it is for the contemporary church.

The Rise of Postmodernism

Postmodernism represents one of the greatest obstacles to the mission of the contemporary church. Huston Smith describes postmodernism as a view of the world in which reality cannot be accessed.³ The influence of the postmodern perspective is prevalent in the culture today.


One can find postmodern thought coursing through the media, academia, and ecclesia.

Postmodernism is a shift from the Enlightenment ideal of modernism. Modernism describes the pursuit to establish “all-inclusive” explanations for life. The autonomous individual is the highest reality and value. Knowledge is attainable and certain through the objective and precise tool of the scientific method. Modernism promotes the progress of humanity and society through technological advancements. In short, Habermas suggests that modernism preeminently promotes “subjective freedom.”

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9Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 83-84. He proposes that modernism promoted reason as “unifying power of religion.”
He writes: “This was realized in society as the space secured by civil law for the rational pursuit of one’s own interests; . . . in the private sphere, as ethical autonomy and self-realization; finally, in the public sphere related to this private realm, as the formative process that takes place by means of the appropriation of a culture that has become reflective.”

Beginning with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the incipient form of postmodernism found fertile soil in which to flourish by attacking the Enlightenment. To understand postmodernism, therefore, it is important to understand the Nietzschean project that has led to its growth. Nietzsche’s critique of modernism promotes a denial of the “myopic view” of truth, morality, and language.

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10 Ibid.


13 Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966; reprint, 1989), 101. He writes that the essential fabrication permeating culture is that there should be “obedience . . . in a single direction” that leads to “unfreedom of the spirit.”
Nietzsche dismissed the notion of a single meaning for the world. The world has “countless meanings.” In his project, Nietzsche sought to dismantle the “pervasive lie” that Plato, Christianity, and the Enlightenment had perpetrated for centuries.

First, Nietzsche attacked the “mendacious fabrication” of truth and morality. He declared that truth is “a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory.” Wilcox suggests that for Nietzsche “values are not objective” but are relative. Moral values are “created rather than discovered.”

As a counterattack against the prevailing views of truth and morality, Nietzsche called for the rise of the übermensch. The übermensch is a “free spirit” who has broken free of the constraints of the external moral law.

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This person is not chained to the standards of the world. Rather, he “bears his own standards of morality and reason and attempts to vanquish the hitherto reigning traditions and values.” Nietzsche argued that Kant’s belief in an a priori universal moral law must be corrected or “revalued.” Indeed, this “revaluation” was paramount to his philosophy. In his thought traditional morality was a “dying tree” that cannot be saved. Indeed, for Nietzsche, the concept of “right and wrong” was nonsensical.


18Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 103-107. See, Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 21; idem., Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 136. Nietzsche condemned Plato for inverting reality through the creation of an imaginary, true realm. Christianity continued this falsity of the imaginary realm (Beyond Good and Evil, 14-23). The metaphysicians of modernity embraced the similar notion of a metaphysical realm beyond this world (Zarathustra, 136). The notion of an imaginary realm was the origination of the false ideal of universal morality. This is the “mendacious fabrication” that Nietzsche sought to reverse.


20Kaufmann, Nietzsche, 109.

Nietzsche believed in a multiplicity of moralities. None of these moralities can be “absolutized” as solely justifiable.22 Values are based upon preference rather than reason or rationality.23

Nietzsche also attacked “mendacious fabrications” in the concepts of language. Nietzsche proposed that reality was a function of grammar -- a linguistic construct of the social context.24 Language itself is the creator of truth.25 Language is a system of interpretation which opens a beautiful vista of “eternal unfolding” for meaning.26 It is the tool which creates the interpretation of reality.


23Nietzsche, Zarathustra, 213, in which the prophet says, “All my progress has been attempting and a questioning -- and truly one has to learn how to answer such questioning! That however -- is to my taste: not good taste, not bad taste, but my taste, which I no longer conceal and of which I am no longer ashamed.”


“Correctness” of interpretation is not the most important goal of language, because language creates its own truth. Through the interpretive “will to power,” a new language is introduced, and a new reality which corresponds to the language comes into being. Truth is fiction “imaginatively produced” by the “arbitrariness of the elements of language.” Nietzsche’s project rejects the idea that language is a fixed representation of a fixed reality.

Nietzsche’s “yes-saying” and “no-saying” produced a clear path for the exaltation of the postmodern mind. Rather than absolute truth, the postmodern mind reflects the arbitrariness of truth according to social context. Rather than universal morality, the postmodern mind embraces perspectival morality. Rather than language as representative of reality, the postmodern mind finds language as the creator of reality.

27Thiele, 103.

28Nietzsche, Will to Power, 267. He writes that individuals “set up a word at the point at which our ignorance begins” and the word is “the horizon of our knowledge, but not ‘truths.’”


Need for Present Study

Many books, essays, and articles seek to help the church to engage the adherents of postmodernism with the gospel of Christ. These works may be categorized into four basic groups: descriptive, responsive, corrective, and postmodern. The descriptive group details the current situation of the postmodern condition, offering an appropriate Christian response in the concluding chapter or a few paragraphs at the close of each chapter. The responsive category focuses upon a Christian response to the postmodern condition, detailing the postmodern tenets in the introduction. The corrective category seeks to examine and negate the destructive tendencies of postmodernism. The postmodern category embraces much of the tenets of postmodern thought as an appropriate Christian response.

31Definitions are given throughout the dissertation.
This proposed dissertation falls into the responsive category. More specifically, this dissertation proposes a very specific evangelistic response to the challenges of the postmodern condition from an exegetical analysis of the first-century church as reported in the New Testament.

While some works attempt to demonstrate a biblical response to the postmodern world, they fail to address specifically the issue of evangelism in the ministry of the church to the postmodern person. Other works provide a sound evangelistic approach to the postmodern condition, but they fail to offer an in-depth exegetical analysis of Scripture. These dissertations offer responses to the postmodern condition, but they lack either the depth of consideration in terms of evangelism or the depth of exegetical analyses.

Gosnell’s dissertation deals with postmodernism and evangelism. His approach, however, is mostly analytical.

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38 The suggestion here is that the works have something other than evangelism as their theses, or that they offer philosophical approaches to postmodernism.
He analyzes the rise of postmodernism, postmodernism in contemporary culture, and strategies for evangelistic ministry to postmodern people. He focuses upon the contemporary strategies of evangelism in relation to the postmodern condition. Following David Bosch, Gosnell provides insight for the church in evangelism. While providing sound, biblical direction, Gosnell does not focus his attention primarily upon an exegetical analysis of the evangelistic approach of the apostolic church in the first century.

The dissertation seeks to offer an in-depth consideration of evangelism and exegetical analyses. Where Gosnell offers insight into the postmodern condition and proposes evangelistic response, this dissertation presents more exegetical analyses as the paradigm for such responses. Gosnell’s approach focuses the first half of the dissertation on the historical development and contemporary condition of postmodernism. This dissertation, however, focuses upon an exegetical analysis of the evangelistic approach of the first-century church in the New Testament.

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The strength of this dissertation is its analyses of the evangelistic ministry of the apostolic church as foundational for the evangelization of postmodern people.

**An Apostolic Approach**

The premise of this dissertation is that the New Testament approaches to evangelism are sufficient and effective for evangelism in a postmodern context. Similar to the conditions in the contemporary society, the apostolic church evangelized cultures fundamentally opposed to the proposition of the gospel. In the midst of competing worldviews and rampant pluralism, the apostolic church “saturated” the contours of the ancient world with the gospel.41

The term apostolic will reflect the period beginning with Pentecost and ending at the close of the first century.42 An apostolic approach may be defined as the adoption of the examples, directions, and procedures of the apostolic church for the contemporary church setting.

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42Everett Harrison, *The Apostolic Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), ix-xii. Harrison divides the New Testament into “Gospel History” (the four Gospels) and “Apostolic History” (the remainder of the New Testament). This dissertation follows a similar division, but focuses upon Acts and the Pauline epistles.
The record of the apostolic church found in the New Testament provides the basis for the work of the contemporary church. Robert Guelich correctly states that the apostolic church serves as the “norm for all Church history.”

This writer has chosen this topic due to the need for a coherent and biblical approach for the evangelization of postmodern people. Within the plethora of material dealing with evangelism in general, a specific approach for the evangelization of postmodern people rarely is found. Furthermore, within the several books and articles dealing with the evangelization of the postmodern person in particular, a coherent, biblical paradigm often is missing. As a response to this condition, this writer seeks to offer an approach for the evangelization of postmodern people following a coherent, biblical model. This model is found in the evangelistic strategy of the apostolic church detailed in the Book of Acts and the Pauline epistles.

Postmodernism makes basic presuppositions that present difficulties for the evangelistic ministry of the church. In order for the contemporary church to evangelize the postmodern person, she must answer these difficulties.

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Erickson suggests that postmodernism presupposes that knowledge is not objective, that authoritative systems of explanation are invalid, and that knowledge is a creation of community.\textsuperscript{44} The apostolic church faced similar challenges for evangelism in “a cauldron of conflicting religious claims within which the Christian faith would have remained tiny but for one fact: the first Christians knew that their faith was absolutely true.”\textsuperscript{45} Through the pattern of the apostolic church, the contemporary church finds an approach to address the four basic challenges of postmodernism: 1) anti-foundationalism, 2) communal truth, 3) deconstruction, and 4) pluralism.\textsuperscript{46} These four challenges will be examined in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{44}Millard J. Erickson, \textit{Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism} (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 18-19.


\textsuperscript{46}These terms will be defined in the following chapter. The definitions will be presented primarily from the viewpoint of postmodern adherents. Although there remains a varying degree of specificity among the theorists of postmodernism concerning the definitions of these terms, the general descriptions present sufficient groundwork for analysis.
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CHAPTER ONE

THE POSTMODERN PERSON AND EVANGELISM

Prevailing Postmodern Themes

Jean-François Lyotard, professor of philosophy at the University of Paris in Vincennes and a leading voice in postmodern thought, defines postmodernism “as incredulity toward metanarratives.”¹ A metanarrative is one “grand theory” which explains the meaning of life. For Lyotard, to be postmodern is to reject all things modern; that is, all pursuits to establish one, over-arching, prevalent theme for life.²

This rejection of metanarratives provides a fountainhead for the prevailing postmodern themes: anti-foundationalism, communal truth, deconstruction, and pluralism. Each of these themes presents a particular challenge for evangelizing the postmodern person.


Dismissal of the Foundations

The postmodern project dismisses the foundations of knowledge.³ Postmodernism rejects “realism” which states that “there exists a mind-independent world” which “can be accessed.”⁴ Postmodernism also rejects foundationalism, which states that knowledge is justified through “certain indubitable” beliefs.⁵ Postmodernism states “that there are no objective, transhistorical truths, or bottom lines which might serve to stabilize the interpretation of the particular historical purposes of groups and individuals.”⁶ Even the pursuit of such foundations is not beneficial.

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“The question is not whether human knowledge in fact has ‘foundations,’ but whether it makes sense to suggest that it does -- whether the idea of epistemic or moral authority having a ‘ground’ in nature is a coherent one.”

Since metanarratives are no longer viable, evangelism faces the problem of anti-foundationalism. Stanley Fish proposes this description of anti-foundationalism:

In a heterogeneous world, a world in which persons are situated -- occupying particular places with particular purposes pursued in relation to particular goals, visions, and hopes as they follow from holding (or being held by) particular beliefs -- no one will be in a situation that is universal or general (that is, no situation at all), and therefore no one’s perspective (a word that gives the game away) can lay claim to privilege.

In this way postmodernism abandons the correspondence theory of truth which suggests that “a true statement is one which corresponds to reality.” Indeed, Rorty contends that this kind of pursuit of truth should be dismissed altogether.

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8Stanley Fish, There Is No Such Thing as Free Speech and It’s a Good Thing, Too (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 218.

9Grube, 118.

10R. Rorty, Objectivity, Relativism, Truth, 128-29. As will be shown, Rorty contends that the pursuit of truth is an illusion and should not be the endeavor. He opts for conversation with others as the model for meaning.
Alvin Plantinga proposes that Rorty’s postmodernism suggests that “there really isn’t any such thing as truth.”

Communal Truth

David Tracy clearly sets forth the postmodern ideal when he suggests that “human knowledge is finite, communal, and perspectival.” The postmodern comes to truth through the definition of personal experience in the community context. Each community creates its own narrative that defines its beliefs, history, and precepts. Truth is found within the social construct of each community narrative, and “all these narratives are of equal value” according to the postmodern ideal. “No one narrative can claim universality.”

According to Rorty, the community informs and controls the definition of truth. Truth and self are ultimately the constructions of the social context.

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14R. Rorty, Objectivity, Relativism, Truth, 38.
Community is the starting point for truth and self, and a community built for conversation maintains the social context as the only source for guidance.\(^\text{15}\)

Jimmy Long states that truth comes through the lens of the community.\(^\text{16}\) That which is true is that which everyone in the social context of community believes to be true. The universality of truth is found only within the context of community. If one ventures to another social context, then the universality of truth changes.\(^\text{17}\)

In postmodernism multiple truths exist, and the individual is left with only preferences. Absolute truth is the by-product of a communal, totalitarian, oppressive force seeking control and power.\(^\text{18}\) Michel Foucault, a leading postmodern philosopher who was trained at the Sorbonne and lectured at *College de France*, states that “objective knowledge” is the product of a social construct establishing its own truth. This construction is made to affirm the community’s way of life and to oppress others who differ.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 165.

\(^{16}\)Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 70. Communal truth is a predominant theme in postmodernism. The notion of truth as the product of community will be a theme throughout this examination.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 69-70.

In the final analysis, Foucault concludes that the act of knowing is an “act of violence.”¹⁹

The death of the grand narratives gives rise to the petit narratives.²⁰ These are the narratives within the context of the community which give the definition to truth and self. As Millard Erickson reports this development, “Truth is defined by and for the community, and all knowledge occurs within some community.”²¹ Truth is established through “the ground rules that facilitate the well-being of the community in which one participates.”²²

Postmodernism declares that the individual is “centerless and ever-changing.”²³ As the social context changes, beliefs and values of the individual also change.


Self-identity comes through the individual’s contact within the social construct of community. In postmodernism, the community defines truth and dispenses personhood. The individual who does not match the norms of the community becomes “rehumanized” to match the prevailing norms of the community.

Community, therefore, is vital for the postmodern perspective. It is the “only source of guidance” in determining the beliefs and values for life. As Henry Knight, assistant professor of evangelism at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, states, “Instead of the individual being prior to the community, the community is prior to the individual; participation in the community with its network of practices and relationships is what constitutes the personhood of the individual.”

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24 Tracy, Plurality and Ambiguity, 19-20, 110-14; Stanley Grenz, A Primer on Postmodernism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 156-58; Long, Generating Hope, 70. Long states, “The autonomous self of the Enlightenment has been replaced by tribalism or community.”

25 Lyotard, Postmodern Condition, 63.


27 Henry Knight III, A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern World (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 53. Knight’s evaluation indicates as well the common view of postmodernism that the autonomous individual of the Enlightenment should be rejected. The community provides the appropriate context and clues to self-identity. Without the community, one cannot come to this self-identity.
Postmodernism reacts against community to some degree, in that it views the community as oppressive to the minority group of dissidents within the social construct. On the other hand, postmodernism embraces community as the fundamental agent for the belonging of the individual. The individual is dependent upon the community as the place where self and truth begin, but no single community possesses a system of belief which is perfectly consistent or coherent.  

Although community may be oppressive, paradoxically it is only context for solace in a fragmented world.

Deconstruction of Meaning

Deconstruction is the postmodern project which identifies “ideological inconsistencies or ambiguities in a text that prevent interpreters from claiming that it has a fixed meaning.” Deconstruction seeks to dismantle the metanarrative of modernity, including the gospel.

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Charlene Spretnak suggests that deconstruction is the appropriate and necessary action for the responsible individual. The responsible individual must “deconstruct” objectified meaning in order to overcome the totalitarianism of the cultural constructs. Without such dismantling, the oppressive force of the metanarrative continues to marginalize and subject humanity to violence through its singular control of reality.

Literary criticism has provided the framework for postmodernism to flourish. From the postmodern outlook, language is a cultural construction, and meaning is a social construct. Signifiers may point to a particular object (the signified), but that object is also a signifier of something else. The result of these layers of signifiers is a mass of meaning that must be taken apart, layer by layer.

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Postmodernism, therefore, is a “precommitment” to the “arbitrariness of the linguistic sign” so that the “signifier” becomes the focus of “orientation and value.” Language is arbitrary and capricious, incapable of disclosing meaning. The answer to this network of artificial signs is deconstruction.

Baudrillard describes this project of postmodernism as a “metamorphosis of the macro-structures into innumerable particles which bear within them all the stigmata of the networks and circuits -- each one forming its own micro-network and micro-circuit.” Deconstruction dismisses the intent of the author as irrelevant to interpretation. All interpretations, therefore, “are equally valid or equally meaningless (depending upon your point of view).”

Deconstruction does not provide comfortable solutions, but rather it embraces fragmentation. Postmodernism seeks deconstruction without reconstruction.

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Edgar McKnight suggests that the deconstructionist observes the “scene of textuality” from a distance and “refines all writing into ‘free floating’ texts.” In essence, the world itself becomes a decentered montage of free-flowing thought without any “sacred canopy.”

Pluralism

The result of deconstruction is pluralism in postmodern thought. “[Philosophical pluralism is the belief] that any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong. The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism. No religion has the right to pronounce itself right or true, and the others false, or even (in the majority view) relatively inferior.” In the words of Richard Rorty, pluralism consists of “lots of cultural options but no privileged central discipline or practice,” leaving the individuals “unable to worship anything.”

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Society should not embrace one, singular object of worship due to the plurality of options and disciplines. Rorty’s pragmatic postmodernism encourages the individual to “rejoice in a lot of different things.” 42 Lesslie Newbigin indicates that this brand of pluralism celebrates plurality “as things to be approved and cherished.” 43

For the postmodern this celebration and exaltation of plurality leads to the acceptability of all truth-claims as equally valid. Fredric Jameson notes that the historical uniqueness of postmodernism is the “sheer heteronomy and emergence of random and unrelated subsystems of all kinds” which are unified in a theory of differentiation. 44 Within this unified theory, “no functional conception of a ruling group, let alone, class, can be conceived.” 45

Postmodernism replaces “master narratives” with “heteronomous, random petit narratives.” None of these local stories gain privilege over other local stories.


45Ibid., 349.
Rorty proposes that “there are many ways to talk about what is going on, and that none of them gets closer to the way things are in themselves than any other.”

**Preeminent Challenges for Evangelism**

The prevailing themes of postmodernism present specific challenges for the evangelization of postmodern people. Yet, as McGrath notes, the future of Christianity depends upon evangelism. C. E. Autrey defines evangelism as “urging the lost to accept Christ as Saviour [sic].” Evangelism is the communication of the gospel to the unconverted so that they might repent of their sin, trust Jesus as their Savior, and surrender to Him as Lord in service through the local community of faith. The evangelization of postmodern people encounters three preeminent challenges: the gospel as metanarrative, epistemology, and hermeneutics.

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The Gospel as Metanarrative

Evangelism bases its truth-claims on the metanarrative of Scripture.\textsuperscript{50} Robert Webber describes the Christian metanarrative as “a rehearsal of the saving deeds of God in history” which culminate in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{51} The Christian metanarrative “is the story of the meaning of history.”\textsuperscript{52} Such a totalizing statement about the gospel, however, is unacceptable in the postmodern milieu.

The Pentecost sermon is metanarrative (Acts 2).

Here are the humanity of Jesus, God’s approval, Jesus’ power, man’s wickedness, God’s redemptive purpose, Jesus’ death and resurrection, and God’s judgment upon sin and death. Add to these God’s promise of Jesus’ ultimate victory at [H]is second advent (Acts 2:34-35), the lordship of Christ, and [H]is saviourhood (Acts 2:36). . . . This body of truth became the gospel of the early Christians and God honored it.\textsuperscript{53}

God’s saving activity fulfilled in Jesus is the metanarrative that tells the “true story of the world.”\textsuperscript{54}

The gospel is the Christian metanarrative.

\textsuperscript{50}J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, \textit{Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 83.

\textsuperscript{51}Robert Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Faith}, 93.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{54}Middleton and Walsh, \textit{Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be}, 83.
The challenge for evangelism centers on presenting the gospel as metanarrative without altering the expression and content of the Christian faith to make the gospel palatable to the postmodern deconstructionist.\textsuperscript{55} Evangelism is the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the ontological and epistemological basis for salvation and life. In postmodern thought, the very essence of the gospel demands deconstruction.\textsuperscript{56}

The Challenge of Epistemology

With the dismantling of all metanarratives, including the gospel, postmodernism presents the challenge of epistemology in the evangelistic effort. Evangelization of postmodern people depends upon the communication of the gospel which propositionally corresponds to reality. As Stanley Grenz suggests, the postmodern rejection of the “reigning epistemological principle -- the correspondence theory of truth . . . undermines Christian claims that our doctrinal formulations state objective truth.”\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55}Erickson, \textit{Postmodernizing the Faith}, 151-52, 154.


\textsuperscript{57}Stanley Grenz, \textit{Primer on Postmodernism}, 163.
Epistemology is the study of the “process of knowing.” Rorty states that epistemology is a discipline seeking to discover “the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge.” The rejection of foundations and project of deconstruction in postmodernism, however, create a problem in epistemology. When no ultimate origin for the foundation of meaning exists, the question arises, “How can I know?”

For Rorty, the answer to this question is to “get beyond” epistemology. Rorty suggests that the epistemological quest results in the ineffable, by which the “recontextualization of signs” unceasingly alters meaning. A systematic theory of meaning in postmodernism, therefore, does not exist. The “supposed” foundations of knowledge are merely the “product of the choice of perceptual metaphors” rather than a presentation of corresponding reality.

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59 Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 140.


61 Rorty, Truth and Progress, 95.


63 Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 159.
Rorty approvingly cites Heidegger’s idea that objectivity in epistemology emerges from the description of things “before us” which is personal perception rather than the representation of reality.\textsuperscript{64} Rorty, therefore, proposes to replace epistemology with the justification of meaning through the social context.\textsuperscript{65}

The abandonment of epistemology presents a problem for the evangelization of postmodern people. Evangelism consists of a “biblical doctrine of epistemology.”\textsuperscript{66} The Holy Spirit leads the individual to the acquisition of truth and meaning (John 16:8-13). With the removal of epistemology, the work of the Holy Spirit and the gospel becomes simply another metaphor of perception rather than a true description of reality in postmodernism.

The Challenge of Hermeneutics

Although originally a theological discipline, hermeneutics has broadened to include a variety of study.


\textsuperscript{65}Rorty, \textit{Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature}, 209-212. Rorty takes this challenge up in chapter 5, entitled, “From Epistemology to Hermeneutics.”

\textsuperscript{66}Millard J. Erickson, \textit{Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues} (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 51-52. The gospel witness seeks to open the avenue for the acquisition of truth by the postmodern.
Hermeneutics is a set of principles which is utilized “to understand what something means, to comprehend what a message -- written, oral, or visual -- is endeavoring to communicate.”\textsuperscript{67} Currently, hermeneutics exists as a philosophical as well as theological discipline.\textsuperscript{68} 

Deconstruction presents a philosophical and theological movement in hermeneutics. Mark Taylor’s “death of God”\textsuperscript{69} and Roland Barthes’ “countertheological refusal of God”\textsuperscript{70} represent theological and philosophical proposals. While Carl Rashke suggests that “deconstruction is the death of God put in writing,”\textsuperscript{71} Stephen Moore contends that Derrida and his brand of deconstruction exists in a “muted dialogue with theology,” and he suggests that deconstruction is not “utterly inimical to theological concerns.”\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{67}Klein, et al., Biblical Interpretation, 4.


\textsuperscript{69}Mark C. Taylor, Deconstructing Theology (Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1982), 90.


\textsuperscript{71}Carl A. Raschke, “The Deconstruction of God,” in Deconstruction and Theology, eds. Thomas A. Altizer, et al. (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 3.

Whether viewed from a negative or neutral view, postmodern hermeneutics speaks to the theological endeavor of evangelism.

Through deconstruction postmodernism dismisses the author in the hermeneutical process. Derrida suggests that the intent of the author does not lead to the ultimate meaning, because “the possibility of its being repeated another time -- breaches, divides, expropriates the ‘ideal’ plenitude or self-presence of intention.” This “iterability” produces alternate meanings even while the author speaks or writes with a particular meaning in mind. The author’s intention is “contaminated” by the possibility that what he says is “(already, always, also) other than” the author’s intent.73

The dismissal of the foundations and the disappearance of the author in postmodernism moves “interpretation” from a truth claim emerging from a text to a reference “to what the reader makes of the text.”74 Therefore, Rorty confidently suggests that hermeneutics is the appropriate remedy for the absence of epistemology.


74Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 38.
Rorty posits that hermeneutics is “hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology will not be filled.”

Postmodern hermeneutics does not begin with meaning prior to interpretation. Even authorial intent does not provide a prior meaning. Rather, postmodernism suggests that “what one finds in a text depends on what aims, categories, and perspectives one brings to it.” According to Derrida, the “signified always already is in the position of the signifier.” No “transcendental signified” exists. Meaning, therefore, becomes the creation of the reader.

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76 Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text*, 49.

77 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 73.

78 Ibid., 6-7.

79 Moore, *Poststructuralism*, 50, 56. Moore’s analysis is instructive. Moore seeks to “capsize the hierarchical opposition that established the parameters of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.” He wants to demonstrate that the woman of Sychar is the “more enlightened partner in the dialogue.” He traces the imagery of water in John’s Gospel, ultimately demonstrating that “Jesus’ physical thirst [19:28], therefore, is the necessary precondition for the proleptic yielding up of that which is intended to satiate the spiritual thirst of the believer, namely, the Holy Spirit.” Moore contends that “the hierarchical opposition established at the well is inverted at the cross, the ostensibly superior, pleromatic term (living water, Spirit) being shown to depend for its effective existence on the inferior, insufficient term (literal well water), contrary to everything that the Gospel has led us to expect.”
Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen have studied the influence of postmodernism in the Christian culture. They have found that the influence of postmodern hermeneutics has hampered the evangelistic effort of the church.

The impact of relativism has wormed its way into the church. Take a look at our Bible studies. Many interpretations of the same passage are allowed and accepted as equally valid. Everyone’s opinion is considered equally viable. Respecting the ideas of others has been given precedence over a search for the actual intention of the author. In fact the unrealized assumption is that one’s sincere ideas are synonymous with truth.  

Postmodern hermeneutics leads to an indefinite number of equally valid interpretations of a particular text. As Robert Yarborough correctly concludes, “A contemporary commitment to hermeneutical pluralism, if not anarchy, is demanded by postmodern experience, with a primary casualty being God’s Scriptural witness to [H]is unified, redemptive and knowable presence in the world.”

Rorty trades epistemology for “conversation.” Conversation unfolds sentences, bringing about a relative, conceptual truth in the context of a particular community.

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80 Hahn and Verhaagen, Reckless Hope, 39.


82 Rorty, Philosophy and Mirror of Nature, 392-94.

83 Ibid., 226-29.
The outcome of this conversation is the positive goal of “unforced agreement with tolerant disagreement.”84

Such conversation, although commendable in its desire for “unforced agreement” and “tolerant disagreement,” begins with the premise of a truth that is relative to the community in which one exists, and this premise is untenable in evangelism. Evangelism proclaims that the gospel is absolute truth for all of humanity.85

Possible Opportunities for Evangelism

The postmodern condition also presents possible opportunities for the evangelistic task. Albert Mohler Jr. indicates that “postmodernism may well represent a new evangelistic moment.”86 The following postmodern confession elucidates the situation for evangelism: “I have no beliefs. I belong to no community, tradition, or anything like that. I’m lost in this vast, vast world. I belong nowhere.”87

84Rorty, Objectivity, Relativism, Truth, 17.

85P. T. O’Brien, Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 70-75.


This interview demonstrates that the yearning of the individual caught in the morass of a deconstructed life may provide opportunities for evangelism.

Search for a Better Story

Postmodern people are in search of better stories for personal existence.\textsuperscript{88} They desire connections with stories that will bring fulfillment to their lives. Derrida concedes this postmodern yearning when he pronounces the possibility of “nostalgia” over what is lost in his project of \textit{différance}. Derrida calls for “laughter and dance” instead of nostalgia, because the “quest for the proper word and the unique name” continues.\textsuperscript{89} It is this quest that provides opportunity for the gospel in the evangelization of postmodern people.

The only legitimate story in postmodern thought is the localized narrative.\textsuperscript{90} The local story, according to Alasdair MacIntyre, provides one interpretation of life.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 181-83.


\textsuperscript{91}Alasdair MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 211-216.
Postmodern people see their local stories as only one of innumerable, equally true stories.

The buffet of localized narratives rests upon the table of the postmodern metanarrative. The postmodern individual faces the choices of a smorgasbord of narratives to provide significance and meaning to life. This represents the Derridean “laughter and dance.” The quest for the ultimate signifier and the most beneficial story remains ever before the postmodern individual. Postmodern people are searching for the story that will satisfy the appetite of their souls.

Although postmodernism rejects the gospel as metanarrative, it must respect it as a local narrative. It has no place of privilege at the postmodern table, but it continues to be served. What then is the advantage? Grenz offers this description of opportunity: “At the heart of being a Christian is a personal encounter with God in Christ. . . . It is in this context of making sense out of life by means of recounting the story of a transformative religious experience that doctrinal propositions find their importance.”

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92This has been shown by Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford, 1991), 171-79.

The postmodern quest for a better story offers an opportunity to share the gospel. Through the telling of the gospel, the power of God takes hold of people, leading them toward salvation (Rom 1:16). The evangelistic witness presents postmodern people with a choice of a better story for their lives. When they encounter the gospel of Jesus Christ, they determine whether the story of Christ provides a better story for their personal experience. As Leighton Ford indicates, they choose “either to reject the Story of God or to merge [their] story with His Story.”

Search for Connection

The outcome of postmodernism is a “decentered self.” The postmodern individual is “free-falling” amidst the chaotic waters of plurality. The concept of truth that is non-representational and communal has created a society of individuals who are disconnected and fragmented. The postmodern person searches for connections which will offer stability in life. Berger’s description of the postmodern people in the flux of disorientation represents the search for a community that provides meaning in life.

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In the postmodern world, “reality and identity are malignant transformed into meaningless figures of horror. To be in a society is to be ‘sane’ precisely in the sense of being shielded from the ultimate ‘insanity’ of anomic terror. Anomy is unbearable to the point where the individual may seek death in preference to it.”

Grenz insightfully indicates that postmodern people are suspicious of verbal presentations of the gospel, but they are attracted to a community of believers in which the gospel is incarnated among the relationships. This community is characterized by “wholesome, authentic, and healing relationships.” R. Daniel Shaw also connects the postmodern desire for community with the evangelistic mission of the church. The community of believers may offer a place of connection between the postmodern reality of this world and God’s reality found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The community of faith connects with postmodern people at the point of need. The postmodern search for connection provides a possible opportunity for the evangelization of postmodern people.

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97 Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 22. “Anomy” is the loss of any secure sense of meaningful order to the world.

98 Grenz, Primer on Postmodernism, 169.

Search for a Better Life

The postmodern project is a search for a better life. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that postmodern people seek life freed from the oppressive forces of modernity.\(^{100}\) The entire project of postmodernism seeks to divest individuals from the nightmare of the world in which they live and which the Enlightenment principles created. This nightmare includes the horrors of victimization, totalization, oppression, and injustice.\(^{101}\) These descriptions indicate that postmodern people want a better life.

The postmodern generation notes the inadequacies of the world.\(^{102}\) Tom Beaudoin suggests that the postmodern generation is “suffering” under the threat of nuclear holocaust, AIDS, and the national debt. Their “suffering” leads them to a “spiritual crisis of meaning.”\(^{103}\)

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\(^{103}\) Tom Beaudoin, Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 96-97. Beaudoin takes suffering as a possible avenue for connection with the gospel message, but also warns against trivialization of suffering.
Ultimately, they seek liberty from the multitude of diversities which overwhelm them.\textsuperscript{104}

The postmodern inability to access the absolute is the “pleasure of pain,” according to Lyotard.\textsuperscript{105} The painful pleasure of fragmented life, however, is not enough to satisfy the quest of the postmodern person. This fragmented life that they experience in their “hermeneutics of suspicion” creates a need to discover “becomings of self” in the midst of deconstruction. Winquist suggests that this reconstruction is found ultimately through a “meaningful community” of love.\textsuperscript{106}

The possible opportunity for evangelism is found in this quest for a better life in a community of love. Suffering is the common language of all generations.\textsuperscript{107} According to Fiorenza, “Suffering brings us to the bedrock of human existence.”\textsuperscript{108} The reality of suffering presents common ground for the witness and the postmodern person.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 120.

\textsuperscript{105} Lyotard, The Inhuman, 126-27.


\textsuperscript{107} Beaudoin, 120.

This misery is precisely how “God is preparing people in the world to respond to the gospel.”\textsuperscript{109} The reality of suffering makes the gospel accessible to a postmodern person.

\textbf{An Apostolic Approach to the Postmodern Challenge}

Jürgen Moltmann wrote: “The apostolic church is the missionary church.”\textsuperscript{110} As noted in the introduction, an “apostolic approach” refers to the examples, directions, and procedures of the New Testament (NT) church recorded especially in Acts and the Pauline epistles. An apostolic approach utilizes the work and ministry of the apostolic church as the paradigm for the evangelization of postmodern people today.

The evangelical community offers various biblical paradigms related to the postmodern challenge.\textsuperscript{111} Millard Erickson evaluates the primary approaches to postmodernism within evangelical circles. He identifies four approaches. The first approach endeavors to “alter the expression and even the content of the Christian faith.”\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109}Long, \textit{Generating Hope}, 75.


\textsuperscript{111}Paul Lakeland, \textit{Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 42-43.

\textsuperscript{112}Erickson, \textit{Postmodernizing the Faith}, 152.
The church must in some way adjust the gospel to the postmodern objections to truth as objective, referential, and corresponding to reality. The gospel as metanarrative must also be adjusted in expression according to this approach. Jimmy Long describes this approach as the “assimilating church,” which adopts “some of culture’s characteristics” in order to become relevant to that culture.¹¹³ Leonard Sweet espouses this approach to some extent when he suggests that the church embrace postmodern hermeneutics.¹¹⁴ Erickson charges Middleton and Walsh with this approach “by the way in which they recast the method of utilizing Scripture.”¹¹⁵

The second approach seeks to alter the “method and means” of gospel witness. Erickson suggests that movement to a narrative presentation of the gospel serves as one example of this approach.¹¹⁶ Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen indicate that this type of alteration is good and necessary.


¹¹⁵Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 123-25, 152. See also, Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, 172-85.

¹¹⁶Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 152.
The narrative method speaks “to the specific and unique needs of this generation.” The proponents of an alteration of method or means seek to communicate and relate intimately to postmodern people.

The third approach consists of no adjustment, either in expression or method. Long identifies this approach with the “unchanging church” which ignores culture. These proponents seek to maintain their traditions by “rising above culture.” For Long, this approach is indicative of churches which elevate traditionalism above biblicism. The “kerygmatic” proponents of this approach, however, contend that adjustment in expression or method is not necessary. They suggest that the power of the gospel, illumined by the Holy Spirit, is capable of reaching postmodern people.

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117 Hahn and Verhaagen, Reckless Hope, 58-59.
118 Sweet, Post-Modern Pilgrims, 141-42.
119 Erickson, Postmodernizing the Faith, 152-53.
120 Long, Generating Hope, 26-27. Long highlights correctly the need to remain radically biblical but not necessarily traditional. This means that the paradigm of Scripture informs the evangelistic witness, but the tradition of the church is not necessarily synonymous with the Scriptural paradigm.
121 David Wells, No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 102-104.
The fourth approach involves dismantling the premises of postmodernism. Proponents of this approach contend that postmodern people can be reached through a demonstration of the “impossibility of living” in the postmodern way. Veith represents this approach when he evaluates postmodernism as “passive, cynical, and insecure.” The church which engages the deficiencies of postmodernism demonstrates to postmodern people the “end-result” of a postmodern life. It stresses the contradictions of postmodernism so that the postmodern will see eventually the impossibility of living a meaningful postmodern life.

An apostolic approach offers several advantages to the current proposals. The first advantage of an apostolic approach is fidelity to Scripture as the principal guide in faith and practice. An apostolic approach offers a paradigm for evangelism in light of an exegetical analysis of the NT church. Evangelization flows out of the commendation of Scripture rather than out of an accommodation to culture.

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123 Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 153-54.

124 Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 83.

In other words, the methodology begins with Scripture rather than with postmodernism. Scripture is the guiding principle of faith and practice.

The second advantage of an apostolic approach is effectiveness. An apostolic approach seeks to implement the principles of the apostolic church, which effectively evangelized a relativistic, pluralistic culture. The apostolic church “sought ‘redemptive analogies’ in its presentation of the gospel. . . . Yet at the same time the Church refused to compromise the content of her message.”

In the same manner, the contemporary church must apply the principles of the apostolic church to communicate the gospel without compromising the content of the message.

The third advantage is the community-emphasis in an apostolic approach. From its inception, the apostolic church maintained and emphasized community (Acts 2:41-47). The postmodern culture desires community, and the church can provide the specific answer to this yearning for connection.

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As Grenz points out, the church is the “pioneer community” of individuals who “live out in the present the glorious community for which God created us.” An apostolic approach presents the evangelistic ministry of the NT church as the starting-point for the evangelization of postmodern people.

The following chapter deals with the role of the Holy Spirit in the evangelistic approach of the apostolic church. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) finds deeper significance through an examination of the promise of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and the promise of Christ concerning the Spirit of truth in John’s Gospel. This writer will seek to show the implications of Pentecost and the Spirit’s work in the evangelization of the ancient world and in the evangelization of the postmodern world.

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CHAPTER TWO
PENTECOST, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND EVANGELISM

Christ provides the specific instructions concerning the role of the church in the world. Jesus declared, ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δυνάμειν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς καὶ ἐσεσθέ μοι μάρτυρες ἐν τῇ Ἱερουσαλήμ καὶ πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ καὶ ἐως ἑσκάτου τῆς γῆς.\(^{1}\)

The biblical record of the apostolic church reveals the worldview by which it evangelized the ancient world. This worldview stands in contrast to the postmodern mind-set in several ways. First, with its premise of anti-foundationalism, postmodernism rejects any “interpretation of the particular historical purposes of groups and individuals” through “objective, transhistorical truths.”\(^{2}\) The apostolic church in Acts believed that God purposed

\(^{1}\)“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Greek text comes from, The Greek New Testament, eds. K. Aland, M. Black, et al., 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1983). All translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.

\(^{2}\)See previous chapter, footnote 6.
everything in history to culminate in the Christ-event. This divine purpose continues through the work of the Spirit in the church. According to J. C. O’Neill, “the success of Christianity, despite all the set-backs it encountered, was used to support its claim to be the only true religion.”

Schlatter further suggests that the apostolic church possessed the conviction that Christ directed the community “from within and from without,” so that He is the supreme interpretation of history and the future. In other words, an apostolic approach promotes the conviction that the Christian way is true because it corresponds to the external reality of God’s redemptive activity in history.

Second, postmodernism’s exaltation of “communal truth” dismisses any proposal of absolute, universal truth. Accordingly, any claim to truth is the creation of the social group and context. The apostolic church, however, construed truth as the external product of God’s mind communicated to humanity by God’s Spirit. Insightfully, John Frame proposes that “communal truth” demands omniscient justification in the social context, so that all potential

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objections to any particular truth-claim may be refuted. If, however, God were a member of this social group, then His omniscience would provide the necessary justification for “objective knowledge.” With the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Spirit of truth provides the necessary justification of “objective knowledge” and universal truth in an apostolic approach (John 16:13).

Third, postmodernism’s “precommitment” to deconstruction dismisses the possibility of certainty in meaning. The apostolic church, however, found meaning in the Spirit’s illumination of Christ’s doctrine through the apostles and Scripture. The apostolic church believed that the Spirit indwells and instructs believers within the community, so that they discover the intention of the God of revelation.

Finally, with its preeminence of pluralism, postmodernism disdains any proposal of an ultimate “master narrative.” The apostolic church, however, believed that the gospel is the “master narrative” which presents the only true pathway to life. Peter’s statement to the Sanhedrin in


Acts 4:12 depicts this conviction in the apostolic church. In answer to the Sanhedrin, Peter declares: καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἡ σωτηρία, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομα ἔστιν ἔτερον ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ δεδομένον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐν ὃ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς.⁷ As C. E. Autrey indicates, this statement declares that Christianity cannot “peacefully coexist” with a plurality of religious options, for “Christ and not man was the Messiah.”⁸

This conviction stands in contrast to the postmodern proposal. Unlike Gordon Kaufmann, an apostolic approach does not suggest that the Christian faith is only one among many worldviews imaginatively constructed in the “search for orientation in life.”⁹ Neither does the community construe the communication of the gospel as the articulation of “one particular perspective on life among others.”¹⁰ An apostolic approach presents the gospel as the only “universal salvific truth.”¹¹

⁷“And there is no salvation in another, for there is no other name under heaven which has been given in humanity by which we must be saved.”

⁸C. E. Autrey, Evangelism in the Acts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 78.


¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Schubert M. Ogden, “Problems in the Case for a Pluralistic Theology of Religions,” Journal of Religion 68
As the apostolic church set out to evangelize the world, these biblical convictions became prominent. The following discussion will seek to indicate how God alleviates the barrier of competing worldviews and opens the door for evangelization of postmodern people.

**Pentecost and the Spirit of Truth, Acts 2:1-13**

Pentecost is the starting-point for a discussion of an apostolic approach to evangelize postmodern people. Pentecost is an historical and theological hinge for the role of the Spirit and evangelism.¹² The fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and Christ’s promise of the Paraclete (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15) demonstrate the historical significance and theological implications of the Spirit in the evangelization of postmodern people.¹³

**Fulfillment of the Visionary Gift, Joel 2:28-32**

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost presents the


¹³Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 135.
historical hinge for the inauguration of a new age.\textsuperscript{14} Peter’s sermon at Pentecost acknowledges the coming of the Spirit as the inauguration of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32) in which the Spirit provides the δύναμις promised by Christ for evangelization.\textsuperscript{15}

The prophecy of Joel demonstrates the power of the “visionary gift” through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This “visionary gift” is the abiding presence of God with His people through His Spirit. Calvin surmises that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32\textsuperscript{16} promises “something greater than what the fathers under the Law experienced,” for God “did not pour out His Spirit so abundantly and so largely under the Law, as after the manifestation of Christ.”\textsuperscript{17}

Through Joel, God said, \textit{“And it shall come to pass after so I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh”} (Joel 2:28, 3:1 BHS).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14}Merrill Unger, “The Significance of Pentecost,” Bibliotheca Sacra 122 (April 1965): 175.

\textsuperscript{15}See the discussion on the relationship between δύναμις and έξουσία below on pages 84-87.


\textsuperscript{18}“And it shall come to pass after so I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28, 3:1 \textit{BHS}).
presence through the outpouring of His Spirit.  

Peter affirms the prophecy’s fulfillment at Pentecost (Acts 2:16). When God pours out His Spirit (הרו), He pours Himself upon whom He chooses to accomplish the work He desires, so that the intention of God is “the personal experience of every member of the religious community.”

Joel indicates the essence of the “visionary gift” through three terms: אוב (to prophesy), לוב (to dream), and ב (to see). Keil suggests that אוב is the general designation of the prophetic gift, and that visions and dreams are two forms of prophetic revelation. When God pours out His Spirit, He will reveal Himself and His word to His people, and they will proclaim it to the world.

At Pentecost, all of Christ’s followers receive the

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“visionary gift” and become a “nation of prophets.”²³ It is an historical turning-point in God’s redemptive purposes.²⁴ The Spirit fills (ἐπλήσθησαν) the followers of Christ to “make them missionaries and proclaimers of the good news.”²⁵

The Old Testament (OT) prophets present one paradigm for the “visionary gift.” One aspect of this paradigm is that God clothes the prophet with His Spirit. Schniedewind suggests that God clothes the prophet with His Spirit, so that the person receives and delivers His word with the people to whom he is sent.²⁶ Having received this “visionary gift” of God through revelation, the prophet discloses to humanity “what otherwise would remain concealed.”²⁷ Von Rad suggests that the prophet “completely submerges his own ego” and speaks “as if he were his master

²³H. W. Wolff, Joel and Amos, 66.


himself speaking.” Thus, the outpouring of the Spirit empowers the prophet to engage culture as a living, speaking embodiment of God’s word.

Fretheim suggests that Christ is the “culmination” of the “visionary gift.” Jesus fully reveals divine truth, proclaims the way of forgiveness, and calls for decision as prophet. His ministry as prophet extends to His followers. Thus, Pentecost marks the continuation of the “visionary gift” by which God’s people fulfill the function of prophet with Christ.

Pentecost signifies a new relationship between God and humanity. Although Joel most likely envisions solely as Israel, Pentecost (Acts 2) and the outpouring of


the Spirit upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:43-45) recasts to include πάντα τὸν πιστεύοντα εἰς αὐτόν (Acts 10:43). Everyone who believes in Jesus will receive forgiveness of sin and “will stand in a relationship of immediacy to God” through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost’s events in Acts 2 provide a framework for the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Indeed, “the whole historical context in which it [Pentecost] takes place shows that it was the outgrowth and development of God’s past dealings with Israel.”

Pentecost was the culminating act in an agelong process of redemptive activity, the final step in the descent of the divine into human. Jesus as an external Presence now became enthroned Sovereign in the hearts of His people. A new era of the Kingdom had begun in Spirit-endued witnesses. The Gospel had become life and power within them. At last they were ready to go forth as laborers in the harvest of the Lord.

The followers of Christ continue His ministry in the

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They reveal God’s truth, proclaim His redemptive work, and call the world to accept His salvation.

Likewise, Pentecost elucidates contemporary application for apostolic evangelism with postmodern people. An apostolic approach depends upon the δύναμις promised by Christ (Acts 1:8), inaugurated at Pentecost (Acts 2), and continued today through the presence of the Spirit. Christ’s followers continue in the postmodern milieu as a “nation of prophets” possessed by God’s Spirit to accomplish His redemptive mission in the postmodern world.

Selected Paraclete Passages in John’s Gospel

An examination of the Paraclete passages in John’s Gospel provides a theological foundation for engaging individuals in the postmodern milieu. These passages demonstrate that Christ’s redemptive mission “is continued through the Paraclete and the disciples.”

Much of the literature on these passages focuses

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upon the various interpretations of the term, παράκλητος.  

Jesus identifies the Paraclete as τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The phrase indicates “the Spirit who communicates truth.”

The concept of truth, ἡ ἀληθεία, needs further examination. John’s use of ἀληθεία is closely akin to the Hebrew term נַפֶּס. In a general sense, נַפֶּס denotes that which is solid, valid, or trustworthy. When used in connection with God’s revelation, however, נַפֶּס denotes that which corresponds to fact or that which is not false. When the OT prophets spoke, they communicated God’s truth to others. In this communication, they spoke the word of God as נַפֶּס (Jer 23:29). Quell, therefore, suggests that one who


43Ibid., 1:234-35.
communicates πράxis shares “the incontestable fact of truth, and exercises truth, just as truth is the foundation in God’s own acts and words.” Dodd concurs that ἀλήθεια often denotes the “eternal reality as revealed to men.” Therefore, truth is the divine reality disclosed by God to humanity. The Spirit is the “mediator of divine revelation.” This stands in direct contrast to the postmodern premise that truth is inaccessible. The Holy Spirit reveals truth, which corresponds to fact and eternal reality.

Barrett indicates that John employs ἀλήθεια as “the Christian revelation brought by and revealed in Jesus.” Indeed, in the context of chapter 14, ἀλήθεια in verse 17 calls to mind the self-appellation of Jesus in verse 6: ἐγώ εἰμι ἥ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή (John 14:6). The Spirit of truth unveils, not merely a concept of truth, but the person

44Quell, s. v. “ἀλήθεια,” TDNT, 1:235.


47Ibid., 142.


49“The way and the truth and the life.”
who is truth.\textsuperscript{50} As Kelly Monroe suggests, truth in reference to divine revelation is "neither an abstract concept nor a social construct," but truth is Christ.\textsuperscript{51} This follows the proposal of Emil Brunner, who writes: "Truth has come into being through Jesus Christ. This is the very core of the biblical message. Truth is something that happens, that God does. Jesus Christ not only reveals, [but also] He at once fulfills and realizes the will of God."\textsuperscript{52} The Spirit makes divine reality accessible -- ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{53}

Furthermore, the Spirit of truth unveils the significance of Christ’s teachings to His followers. In verse 26 Jesus promises, \begin{quote}
ο δε παράκλητος, το πνεύμα το ἀγιον, ὁ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὄνοματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἀ εἴπον ὑμῖν.
\end{quote}
\textsuperscript{54} The consideration of διδάξει πάντα


\textsuperscript{54}“But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, that one will teach you all
things and call to your mind all things which I have said to you" (John 14:26). Some commentators, such as Dunn, conclude that the διδάξει πάντα of 14:26 includes “new revelation,” albeit controlled by the original revelation of Christ.55 The Holy Spirit directs the minds of the followers of Christ to the doctrine taught by Jesus. D. A. Carson, however, indicates that the Spirit of truth speaks directly to the disciples. Accordingly, the Paraclete’s work is to help the disciples grasp the significance of Christ’s teaching following the resurrection.56 Carson, however, does allow for the implication of illumination by the Spirit at work in believers today.57

Stuhlmacher indicates, on the other hand, that “das Johannevangelium erklärt ausdrücklich, das Jesuszeugnis der nachösterlichen Gemeinde sei vom Geist-Parakleten bevollmächtigt und getragen (Joh 16,7ff.). Bei der biblischen martyría handlet es sich also durchgängig um ein Wortzeugnis in der Kraft des den Menschen zur Erkenntnis und

55Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 351-52.
56D. A. Carson, Gospel According to John, 505.
57Ibid., 541-42.
Stuhlmacher maintains the uniqueness of the inspiration of Scripture through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, also, illumines the deposit of divine revelation to believers. Through this ministry, the Spirit equips believers to proclaim the gospel to others. Through the Spirit the believers of Christ “bis heute die Stimme Gottes und seines Christus vernimmt” through Scripture. Erickson also indicates that the ministry of the Spirit of truth helps “believers today to understand Scripture.” The role of the Paraclete as the Spirit of truth is to teach and to remind disciples of the revelation of God through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ so that they might share the gospel of Christ with the conviction that it is absolute truth.

The Paraclete aids followers of Christ for the

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58 Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 53. “The Gospel of John emphatically declares that the testimony of Jesus of the post-Easter community was empowered and born by the Spirit-Paraclete (John 16:7ff.). With the biblical martyrria it is generally a question of a word-testimony which equips humanity for the knowledge and proclamation of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

59 Ibid., 222. Through the Spirit believers of Christ “today hear the voice of God and His Christ.”

evangelization of the postmodern world. The Spirit illumines the followers of Christ today so that they might bear witness to the gospel in their world with conviction. Rather than promoting personal opinion, the Spirit invests believers with the conviction that the gospel is truth.

The theme of the Spirit of truth in John 15:26-27 elucidates the Paraclete’s role in the conviction of truth. The Spirit of truth works in the world as witness to Jesus (μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ). In this passage Jesus declares, “Ὅταν ἐλθῇ ὁ παράκλητος ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας ὁ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ· καὶ ὑμεῖς δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε, ὅτι ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔστε.”

The verb μαρτυρέω describes both the sense of “witness to ascertainable facts” and “the making known and confessing convictions.” The role of the Spirit is to make known the facts concerning Jesus Christ. Allison A. Trites indicates that the witness-motif presents an historical apologetic concerning the miracles and

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61 Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen, Reckless Hope: Understanding and Reaching Baby Busters (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 39.

62 “Whenever the Paraclete whom I send to you from the Father may come, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, that one will testify concerning Me; and you testify, because you are with Me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).

resurrection of Jesus for a lost world. Indeed, the apostolic approach for the evangelization of the ancient world centers upon the concept of witness. Jesus sends the Spirit of truth to empower His followers as witnesses through His own activity of witness. The Spirit empowers witnesses sufficiently in the postmodern world.

Jesus states that the witness of the Spirit conjoins with the witness of His followers in John 15:27. Bultmann suggests that “the Spirit is the power of the proclamation in the community.” John uses different tenses of μαρτυρέω in verses 26 and 27. When he describes the testimony of the Spirit of truth, John uses the future tense, μαρτυρήσει. This represents the future work of the Spirit of truth, which is to bear witness concerning Jesus. In verse 27, John uses the imperative, μαρτυρεῖτε, which denotes a command and mandate. The followers of Christ have the mandate to join with the mission of the Spirit of

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65 This subject will be examined in chapter five.


67 Fritz Rienecker, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, ed. and trans. Cleon Rogers Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976; reprint, 1980), 253. This could be the second person indicative, but the context appears to suggest the imperative.
truth and bear witness concerning Jesus Christ. The Spirit clothes the followers of Christ and their testimony for effective evangelization. Hoyt further suggests that the Spirit provides the δύναμις for “credible witness.”

John further describes the Spirit’s work in 16:13. He highlights the work of the Spirit in the illumination of Christ’s followers. The role of the Spirit, according to John Frame, is to meet the need in believers “for inward change, a need to reconcile ourselves to what God has already revealed.”

The Spirit bears witness of Christ to the world, which is hostile toward Jesus and the gospel. The Holy Spirit is on mission “to bear witness to Christ and to make Christ real to men.” This is the work of the Spirit in 16:7-11. The key term in these verses is ἐλέγχω. Büchsel suggests that ἐλέγχω usually means “to show someone his sin

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and to summon him to repentance."  Bultmann posits a legal setting in which the Spirit stands as the prosecuting attorney.  De la Potterie indicates that ἐλέγχω in this passage is “démontrer l’erreur ou les torts de quelqu’un.”

Κόσμος is the object of the Spirit’s work of ἐλέγχω. In distinctively Johannine language, the κόσμος consists of those who are apart from Christ and opposed to Him. The κόσμος is the aim of the redemptive mission of God through the Spirit.  John indicates that the Paraclete works in the world to lead lost humanity to repentance.

The ὅπι clauses provide further indication of the Spirit’s work (John 16:9-11). Bauer indicates that “die drei ὅπι-sätze 9-11 gehen an, inwiefern der Geist bezüglich der genannten Dinge die Welt zu ihrer Beschämung überführt.”  In this sense, ἐλέγχω takes the ὅπι clauses as

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74 I. De la Potterie, La Vérité dans Saint Jean, 2 vols. (Rome: PBI, 1977), 2:404: “to demonstrate the error or the wrongs of somebody.”


76 Walter Bauer, Das Johannesevangelium (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), 149: “the three ὅπι-sentences concern, in what way the Spirit condemns regarding the named entity the world to its humiliation.”
explicative, by which the Spirit demonstrates how the world is wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Carson seeks to maintain the parallelism of the three ὃποί clauses and concludes that the Spirit speaks to the world’s sin, pseudo-righteousness, and wrong estimation of Jesus and their spiritual reality. Through witness, the Spirit reveals the truth of sin, demonstrates the pathway to righteousness, and warns of impending judgment. The proclamation of the followers of Jesus is the instrument which the Spirit of truth uses to accomplish His work in the world. Through the witness of Christ’s followers, the Paraclete penetrates the evangelistic obstacles to bring individuals to the awareness of their need for repentance and salvation through Christ.

The promise of the “visionary gift” and the promise of the Paraclete become a reality at Pentecost. God pours out His Spirit upon believers in fulfillment of the OT prophecy and Christ’s promise. Believers, then and now, live in personal intimacy with the Father and continue the

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78 Beasley-Murray, John, 281.

ministry of His Son.  

The Holy Spirit: The Bridge for the Objective Truth of the Gospel

The evangelization of postmodern people occurs in a chaotic κόσμος in which postmodernism is hostile to the gospel as objective truth. Bearing witness to Jesus in the postmodern world presents the challenge of epistemology. The ministry of the Spirit, however, provides a bridge between the gospel metanarrative and postmodern incredulity. David Wells correctly argues that the evangelistic witness is effective “because of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to turn rebellious sinners into obedient followers of Christ.”

Epistemology: A Postmodern Dilemma

The postmodern premise suggests that one may not know truth because language is not a clear nor reliable representation of truth. By implication, postmodernism

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proposes that the gospel is an illusionary foundation, since no foundations for knowledge or certainty exist. This presents a dilemma in the evangelistic work of the church. Julian Hartt rightly assesses this postmodern dilemma: “If the ontological truth-claims of the New Testament are false, then the Christian religious life, understood and pursued as the knowledge and service of God in Jesus Christ, is founded on an illusion.”

With epistemology jettisoned in postmodernism, the evangelistic ministry of the church submerges into a quagmire of postmodern skepticism and doubt in relation to the gospel. The postliberal and revisionist approaches to postmodernism increase this skepticism.

For example, the postliberal approach begins with the “self” and moves to Scripture. David Kelsey’s discussion of Scripture presents a postliberal approach. Kelsey sees the authority of a text in its pragmatic and productive uses within the context of a particular

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For Kelsey, texts are authoritative on the basis of “how they are used in the Christian community.” Along these lines, however, Kelsey’s postliberal approach devolves into an extreme pragmatic theory of truth, whereby something is true because it works. Evangelization of postmodern people, then, depends primarily upon the demonstration of the gospel’s pragmatic effects as a sign of its veracity rather than upon the work of the Spirit of truth.

David Tracy proposes a revisionist model which begins with self and moves to questions about God and Scripture. The revisionist approach couples “Christian texts” with “common human experience and language” as the two principle sources of theology. Tracy offers a theology which provides a “proper understanding of our common experience and its fundamental continuity with the God proclaimed in the Christian scriptures.” For Tracy the gospel may be true if it is “existentially meaningful,”

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Ibid., 89.


Ibid., 175.
internally coherent, and verifiable through experiential analysis. Truth is determined by the self-enlightenment which a text provides. In this light, evangelization of postmodern people depends upon the gospel’s ability to lead the individual to self-understanding.

An apostolic approach, however, presents a different solution to the dilemma of epistemology. The “conception of the Spirit” in the evangelistic ministry of an apostolic approach answers the postmodern skepticism.90

The Spirit illumines the hearts and minds of believers through the Scripture to the truth of God found in Jesus Christ,91 so that each believer receives the “Spirit of Christian proclamation.” This outpouring inheres authority (ἐξουσία) and power (δύναμις) for the evangelization of postmodern people. Although postmodernism rejects this type of authority, Jesus declares in Matt 28:18, Ἐδοθή μοι πάσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,92 so that ἐξουσία represents the power of ultimate arbitration ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.93

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89Ibid., 71.
91Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, 890.
92“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and upon the earth.”
93W. Foerster, s.v. “ἐξουσία,” TDNT, 2:566.
Pannenberg notes that “as the Spirit bears witness in believers to Jesus as the truth of God, they themselves are ecstatically raptured and are outside themselves in Jesus, while conversely Jesus is in them to bind them in fellowship with one another, and along with Jesus the Father also takes up [H]is dwelling in believers.”94 Just as Jesus possesses ἐξουσία, He invests His ἐξουσία through the Spirit to His followers. This continual presence of Christ in believers produces the authority for evangelism in a postmodern world. It is this ἐξουσία of Christ which produces the right and responsibility of His followers to πορευθέντες οὐν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθη (Matt 28:19a).95

Bearing witness in the epistemological dilemma of postmodernism highlights the significance of δύναμις. Indeed, the basic meaning of δύναμις centers on one’s ability to perform a task.96 In the context of evangelism, δύναμις is the enabling power of God in the witness of Christ’s followers. According to Christ’s promise (Acts 1:8), this power comes upon Christ’s followers through the Holy Spirit.


95“Therefore as you go make disciples of all nations.”

The Spirit “dispenses and mediates” the power which enabled Christ to fulfill His mission and which equips His followers to “stand in the place of Jesus and continue His work.”97 The Spirit of truth joins Christ’s followers in the witnessing encounter to bear witness together that Jesus Christ is the way, truth, and life.

The Spirit further infuses the witnessing encounter with δύναμις to lead postmodern people to truth. The conversion of Saul provides exemplifies the evangelization in the midst of epistemological uncertainty (Acts 9). Although Saul rejected the “truth-claims” of the gospel (Acts 6-7), the power of the Spirit of truth deconstructs his epistemological skepticism (Rom 1:16-17).98 In the same manner, the Spirit of truth deconstructs the epistemological dilemma of postmodern people.

Borrowing cautiously from Tracy’s revisionist approach, the Spirit of truth establishes the gospel of Christ as “meaningful” to the postmodern person through the conviction (ἐλέγχω) of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

97Ibid., 311.

98This language represents Paul’s experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9). The layers of rabbinic interpretation were deconstructed or unraveled in a decisive encounter with Jesus Christ, the truth. Upon this encounter, Paul’s epistemological skepticism of Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord was diffused. The power of the gospel led him to repentance and salvation.
The Spirit of truth establishes the “meaning” of the gospel through the empowered, internally coherent proclamation of Christ’s witnesses. The Spirit of truth establishes the “truth” of the gospel experientially and existentially in postmodern people. The Spirit of truth answers the postmodern dilemma of epistemology through His witness to truth and the conviction of truth for the postmodern κόσμος of the truth. In this light, the evangelization of postmodern people depends primarily upon the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit to lead postmodern people to truth who is Jesus Christ.

Beyond Babel: Epistemology and ἐπέρας γλώσσαις

The evangelization of postmodern people presents the problem of language in a world of pluralities. The global scope of evangelization for the apostolic and contemporary church creates the difficulties of language and culture. David Harvey describes postmodernism as a rejection of any “meta-language” which can overcome the plurality of “power-discourses” or “language-games.” The events of Pentecost point to the “meta-language” of God through the Spirit which overcomes the problem of languages.

Dunn suggests that “the glossolalia of Pentecost...”

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fulfils [sic] Joel’s expectation of the outpouring of the Spirit in prophecy.”100 In verse 4 Luke states that the disciples ἢρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις, and in verse 6 Luke states that ήκουν εἰς ἑκαστὸς τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ λαλούντων αὐτῶν.101 The difference between γλώσσαις and διαλέκτῳ is the difference between that which is spoken and that which is heard.102 This writer contends that the Spirit of God communicates through the words of Christ’s followers so that the hearer understands the message which is communicated.

Derrida presents the story of Babel as a foundation for deconstruction.103 He states that God “deconstructs” the universal language so that translation is impossible.104 The result is the “multiplicity of idioms” found in a confusion of tongues.105 Derrida posits that God deconstructs meaning. Despite Derrida’s pursuit of confusion and trace through

100Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 174.

101“They began to speak with other tongues” (Acts 2:4), and “Each one was hearing them speaking in his own language” (Acts 2:6).

102See, Malcolm McDow and Alvin L. Reid, Firefall: How God Has Shaped History Through Revivals (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 86.


104Ibid., 7.

105Ibid., 8.
deconstruction, Umberto Eco suggests that the confusion of languages at Babel provides the hope that confusion might end.

Luke’s list of nations (Acts 2:9-11) covers the entirety of the known world in the apostolic period. Amidst these pluralities, the “truth-claims” of the gospel story encountered the obstacles of language and meaning. Yet, ἐτέρας γλώσσας at Pentecost shows that “the Spirit of God speaks all languages.” The reality of ἐτέρας γλώσσας establishes confidence in communicating the gospel cross-culturally, for God speaks through His followers to hearers of all races, languages, and cultures (Acts 2:6-8). Thus, the Spirit reverses the consequences of Babel in Genesis 11:4-9. Pentecost marks the call of grace to “all humanity by making all human languages congruent with God’s

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106 Ibid., 6-7.
109 Thomas C. Oden, Life in the Spirit, 64.
address.” Neil indicates that the occasion of ἐπέραυς γλώσσαι reverses the curse of Babel so that “now men from all nations could be brought into one fellowship by the power of the Spirit.”

The Spirit of truth serves as the epistemological bridge for evangelism with postmodern people. Regardless the cultural, ethnic, or socially informed situation of postmodern people, the Spirit of truth fills the witness of Christ’s followers so that the hearers experience conviction and comprehension.

**Evangelistic Approach at Pentecost, Acts 2:14-41**

Peter’s sermon at Pentecost represents an apostolic approach for evangelism. An examination of Peter’s sermon provides a framework for the proclamation of the gospel in a postmodern world. Ridderbos insightfully suggests that this sermon is illustrative of “apostolic preaching.”

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Accordingly, Peter’s sermon is paradigmatic of other speeches in Acts as well as for evangelism in postmodern times.116

C. H. Dodd indicates that the apostolic κήρυγμα is the public proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers.117 Dodd proposes that the apostolic κήρυγμα includes six basic elements present in Luke’s presentation of the speeches.118 Of these six elements, Peter’s sermon at Pentecost includes five.119 Within this examination, one notes the OT foundations of the messianic age, the life, death, and exaltation of Jesus, and a call to repentance.120

An apostolic approach for the evangelization of

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118 Ibid., 17-24.

119 These five elements are: 1) the dawn of the messianic age (Acts 2:16-21); 2) the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:22-32); 3) Jesus is the exalted Lord sitting at the right hand of God as the head of the “new Israel” (Acts 2:33-36); 4) the Spirit is the sign of Christ’s exaltation (Acts 2:33); 5) a call for repentance, the offer of forgiveness, and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). The sixth element speaks to the consummation of the messianic age (Acts 3:21).

postmodern people requires the proclamation of the gospel. Peter’s sermon provides a pattern for this public proclamation. The apostolic ὄργα is not optional in evangelism, for it is the essence of gospel proclamation.121

Most commentators agree that Peter utilizes either a midrash or pesher model. Generally, the midrash is “interpretive renderings of the Hebrew text.”122 The pesher adds an “eschatological exegesis” by which the OT prophecies find fulfillment in the current time of the commentary.123 Bowker and Longenecker point to Peter’s sermon as a midrash of Joel’s prophecy.124 Ellis suggests that the eschatological focus drawn from Joel 2 reveals Peter’s use of pesher.125 Following Ellis’ suggestion, an apostolic method begins with the contemporary event, brings together an OT text and “christological kerygma,” and applies the interpretation to the evangelization of the hearers.126

121C. H. Dodd, Apostolic Preaching, 8.


123Ibid., 160-61.


125E. Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutic, 201-204.

126Ibid., 203-204.
Peter’s explication of the phenomena of Pentecost to the crowd presents the message of salvation.\textsuperscript{127} Four elements within Peter’s sermon provide insight for an apostolic approach: the allure of the Spirit’s activity, the OT foundation, the “christological kerygma,” and the witness of Christ’s followers. The following section will focus upon these elements as instructive for the evangelization of postmodern people. The propositions from OT Scripture presents a central feature in the definition of the Spirit’s activity, the interpretation of the “christological kerygma,” and in the validation of the followers of Jesus.

Propositions from Old Testament Scripture

Peter’s evangelistic approach interprets the experience of his hearers with the OT Scripture.\textsuperscript{128} Joel 2:28-32 provide the interpretive framework for the miraculous events of Pentecost and serve as a spring-board for the systematic presentation of the gospel.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{127}M. Soards, The Speeches in Acts, 32.

\textsuperscript{128}C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology (London: Nisbet, 1952), 127. Dodd writes that OT scripture “is the substructure of all Christian theology and contains already its chief regulative ideas.” This pertains to a Jewish audience. For the evangelization of Gentiles, see chapter five, “Apostolic Witness in Postmodern Time, Acts 1:8.”

\textsuperscript{129}F. F. Bruce, “The Significance of the Speeches for Interpreting Acts,” Southwestern Journal of Theology 33
Psalm 16:8-11 provides the foundation for the resurrection. A key element in Peter’s interpretation is the identification of דָּסִיד or “favored one” (Ps 16:10). Kaiser suggests that David is the representative and recipient of “God’s ancient but ever-renewed promise.” The term דָּסִיד points to the object of God’s favor and covenant commitment. God’s promise of a future for His דָּסִיד is the “path of life.”

Fitzmeyer indicates that David’s prophetic ability led him to see the future of God’s דָּסִיד. Peter utilizes David’s prophecy that God’s “ultimate hasid would triumph over death. For David, this was all one word: God’s ancient but ever-new promise.” Through the OT foundation, Peter declares that Christ’s resurrection fulfills the promise of the eternal kingdom to David. An analysis of this

(Fall 1990): 21.


133 W. Kaiser Jr., “Promise to David,” 229.
“christological kerygma” will follow in the next section.

Psalm 110:1 provides the foundation for the exaltation of Jesus. Peter declares that the unusual phenomenon at Pentecost is the outpouring of the Spirit from the exalted Jesus Christ. Psalm 110:1 serves as Peter’s OT support for the exaltation of Jesus as well as the blessings of the exalted Christ upon His followers. The oracle from Yahweh to יָהָּוָּה, however, is certain in its portrayal of יָהָּוָּה as distinct from both David and Yahweh.

In this way, OT Scripture serves as the foundation of knowledge to interpret the experience of the hearers. To this foundation, Peter joins the “christological kerygma” and the personal testimony of the disciples. OT Scripture provides the foundation of knowledge for the “truth-claims” of the cross and the resurrection.

The Cross and the Resurrection: An Objective, Historical Reality

Alvin Reid suggests, “The objective message of the cross and Jesus’ resurrection permeated the witness of the

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135See Mark 12:35-37 in which Jesus attributes the psalm to David.
Peter’s sermon affirms that statement. The “christological kerygma” in Peter’s sermon focuses upon the death (Acts 2:22-23), resurrection (Acts 2:24-28; Ps 16:8-11), and exaltation of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:29-36; Ps 110:1). Dunn, following Conzelmann and Cadbury, however, contends that the kerygma of Acts does not contain a “theology of the death of Jesus.” He argues that the sermons in Acts do not interpret the historical fact of Jesus’ death but focus on His resurrection and exaltation.\(^{137}\) I. H. Marshall also acknowledges that Luke provides “scanty” material on the death of Jesus and its significance.\(^{138}\) Marshall, however, finds vicarious atonement in Philip’s evangelistic encounter with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39) and in the formula, “hanging on a tree” (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29).\(^{139}\) Conner argues that Peter applies the Servant motif to Jesus (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30), “who redeems [H]is


\(^{139}\) Ibid., 169-73. For contrary view, see Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 17-18.
Peter’s sermon at Pentecost presents the cross as the essential ingredient in the purpose of God for the salvation of humanity (Acts 2:23). The perfective participle, ὁρισμένη, modifies βουλή. Schmidt indicates that ὅριζω promotes the idea of God’s determination and appointment. Peter’s use of ὅριζω suggests that God set a pathway for the completion of His purpose (βουλή).

Peter indicates that God purposed for Jesus to be crucified. Even though God’s predetermined counsel includes the death of Jesus, Peter unapologetically proclaims the human responsibility. Holtzmann states that “so reichten sich hier menschliche Freiheit und göttliche Notwendigkeit die Hand: Dies die einfachste und wohl auch älteste Form, sich mit dem paradoxen Schicksal des Messias auszusöhnen.”

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141 It is possible that the participle modifies both βουλή and προγνώσει, since both are in the dative.

142 K. L. Schmidt, s.v. ὅριζω,” *TDNT*, 452-56.


144 H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 3d ed., Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament 1/2 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), 34. “So here human freedom and divine necessity presented to themselves the source: this the simplest and probably also oldest form, to reconcile
The issue for Holtzmann is the paradox between divine purpose and human responsibility. Polhill suggests that “Peter carefully balanced the elements of God’s divine purposes and the human responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{145} Peter also declares that the Jewish crowd of hearers and the Gentiles share the guilt of killing Jesus.\textsuperscript{146}

The cross, however, “was not a disaster but an act of God’s grace for man’s salvation.”\textsuperscript{147} Peter proclaims the triumph of God over death through Christ (Acts 2:24).\textsuperscript{148} Morris insightfully states that the message of the cross in the Pentecost sermon “is not put forward from any idea that it was good teaching, or good strategy, or that it could meet a damaging criticism. It is put forward because it is held to be true.”\textsuperscript{149} For Peter and the apostolic church, the cross is an objective, historical reality which God purposed for the salvation of humanity (Acts 2:39).\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{145}John B. Polhill, \textit{Acts}, 112.
\textsuperscript{146}Ibid. “Lawless hands” is idiomatic for Gentiles.
\textsuperscript{147}Neil, \textit{Acts of the Apostles}, 76.
\textsuperscript{150}Alister McGrath, \textit{The Mystery of the Cross} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 29.
Peter also presents the resurrection of Jesus as an objective, historical reality. The apostolic church connects the significance of the cross with the resurrection.\textsuperscript{151} This significance is that the cross is “the means to the end, and that end is victory.”\textsuperscript{152} God provides victory over death through Christ’s resurrection. The gospel promises victory through the inauguration of the new age at Christ’s exaltation and His bestowal of the Spirit to His followers (Acts 2:33).\textsuperscript{153}

An apostolic approach follows Peter’s example. The OT Scripture provides the hearers foundations for belief. The eyewitness testimonies of the disciples about the resurrection also provide a foundation for belief. Finally, Peter presents the proof of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). This represents the “crowning proof that Christ had been raised from the dead and enthroned in heaven as exalted Messiah.”\textsuperscript{154}

David Wells connects this proclamation also to the witness of the Spirit of truth. The witness of the Spirit


joins Peter’s evangelistic proclamation to draw the hearers toward salvation.

The sermon Peter preached at Pentecost was one in which Jesus was the focus and the Holy Spirit’s ministry of conviction was apparent. He convicted listeners of sin (‘you . . . put [H]im to death’; Acts 2:23), righteousness (‘But God raised [H]im from the dead’; [H]e is ‘exalted to the right hand of God’; 2:24, 33), and judgment (‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at [M]y right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’; 2:34-35). Those who heard were ‘cut to the heart’ (2:37); on that day, three thousand believed.155

Thus, Peter joins the testimony of the Spirit to evangelize the Jerusalem crowd at Pentecost.

Following these proofs, Peter concludes his evangelistic sermon with a call for the audience to repent. He declares that the foundations for faith have been laid at the feet of his hearers so that they should know (γινώσκετω) that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). The truth of God’s salvation is the impetus for the creation of the community of faith (Acts 2:41-47).

An apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people proclaims the cross and the resurrection as the “truth-claims” of the gospel to postmodern people. The contemporary church follows the example of the apostolic church, proclaiming the death and resurrection as objective,

155David Wells, God the Evangelist, 45. Peter’s statement in Acts 2:36 is a climactic statement, by which Peter and the apostolic church give to Jesus the highest title, signifying Yahweh Himself.
Robert Webber suggests that evangelism in a postmodern world “must recover the emphasis that Christ’s death is a victory over the powers of evil.”\textsuperscript{156} This is the message which Peter proclaims in his sermon at Pentecost, and it is the content of the proclamation of the gospel in the postmodern world. The proclamation of \textit{Christus Victor} “makes connection with churched and unchurched people.”\textsuperscript{157} In the evangelization of postmodern people, the gospel of the cross and the empty tomb declares that God has gained a victory that is unattainable without Him.

The contemporary church must proclaim the “christological kerygma.” Scripture, personal witness, and the Spirit of truth provide the foundations for belief. Proclaiming the cross and resurrection as objective, historical realities, the Spirit of truth verifies the truth of the gospel and convicts postmodern people.

\textbf{Objective or Communal? The Postmodern Question of Truth}

The “truth-claims” of the cross and the resurrection are essential for the evangelization of

\textsuperscript{156}Robert Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World} (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 150.

\textsuperscript{157}Ibid.
postmodern people; yet for the postmodern mind, the question of truth and the acquisition of truth must be considered. According Richard Rorty and other postmodern theorists, truth is a function of community. The community creates truth that is most beneficial for the continuance of that community. This truth remains in tact until an individual or a group of individuals within the community develop enough skill in the “language games” to change or alter the truth. Truth then changes according to the context of the community and the language games within the community.

The outpouring of the Spirit of truth at Pentecost teaches, however, that community is a function of truth. The Christian community in apostolic times and in the postmodern world is built upon the truth of the gospel and the power of the Spirit of truth applying the truth to the hearts of the hearers. The Holy Spirit creates community through the truth of the gospel. The Holy Spirit, who

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159 On the production of meaning and truth by the community, see Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 14.

comes to indwell individuals upon their conversion, validates the common bond of salvation for every member of the Christian community.\textsuperscript{161} The Holy Spirit creates an epistemological bridge to conversion and an experiential unity within the community.

The Spirit of Truth, Conversion, and Community

Arthur Darby Nock provides a helpful definition of conversion as a “reorientation of the soul” which involves a “turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right.”\textsuperscript{162} In Peter’s Pentecost sermon, the people respond to the gospel with a cry of dismay over their condition (Acts 2:37).\textsuperscript{163}

Peter calls for repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). In the context of this call for decision, repentance connects the hearer to conversion. Stagg confirms this connection when he declares that μετανοέω represents the NT


\textsuperscript{162}Arthur Darby Nock, Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 7.

\textsuperscript{163}Rienecker, Linguistic Key, 267. Luke’s description, κατευγήσαν τὴν καρδίαν, indicates a “painful emotion which penetrates the heart as if stinging.”
idea of conversion. He writes, “The call to ‘repentance,’ then, was a call . . . to conversion.” Repentance and conversion mean to change one’s mind and turn toward something or someone else. Indeed, Behm indicates that conversion is “the basic requirement” in the apostolic kerygma, and μετανοέω is “the heart of the apostolic mission.” Peter clearly presents the connection between μετανοέω and ἐπιστρέφω in Acts 3:19. Repentance is to change one’s mind concerning the old way of life, and conversion is to change one’s direction toward God.

The work of repentance and conversion comes to the postmodern person through the work of the Spirit of truth in the evangelistic engagement. The Spirit of truth leads the postmodern person to the acquisition of the truth of the gospel. Wells suggests that evangelism involves “explanation and persuasion relative to Christ” and the truth of the cross. “Biblical conversion is conversion that is brought about by truth.”

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166 The text reads, μετανοήσατε ὑμῖν καὶ ἐπιστρέψατε εἰς τὸ ἐξαλειφθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας.


168 David Wells, God the Evangelist, 95.
Baptism connects the hearer to community. Barclay writes that baptism joins the “confession of faith” with “entry into the fellowship of the church.” Beasley-Murray shows that the confession of faith identifies the believer to the Lord for the purpose or with the result of salvation. The corollary identification in baptism is incorporation as a member of the community of believers. The believer in baptism numbers “himself with the people who invoke the Name of Jesus” and is incorporated “into the community of those who inherit the Kingdom.”

The concept of incorporation indicates the nature of involvement and participation in Christ’s body. Paul writes, καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἐν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν. Here, Paul emphasizes the relationship between “Spirit-

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170George R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 102-103. The phrase, εἰς ἀφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν (Acts 2:38), should be connected to μετανοεῖν in conjunction with βαπτίζω. As Bruce (Book of Acts, 70) writes: “It would indeed be a mistake to link the words ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ with the command ‘be baptized’ to the exclusion of the prior command to repent. It is against the whole genius of biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite could have any value except insofar as it was accompanied by the work of grace within.”


172“For in one Spirit we all were baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13a).
baptism” and incorporation into the “body of Christ.” Beasley-Murray takes the phrase, ἐν ἐνί πνεύματι, to depict agency, so that the Spirit is the “agent of baptism to membership in the Body.” Beasley-Murray contends that this verse points directly to “Christian baptism in water.” This conclusion presents dangerous implications. The apparent danger of this view, in this writer’s opinion, is the unlikely identification that water-baptism is Spirit-baptism. Beasley-Murray sees this danger and writes that “there is nothing automatic about this association of baptism and the Spirit” but “the relation of the believer with the Spirit is to be construed in strict analogy with his relation to the Risen Christ.” Beasley-Murray, therefore, contends that the reference in this verse is to

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173G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, 169-71. The preposition ἐν may signify the dative, locative, or instrumental case. If one sees the locative case in this verse, then πνεύματι is the realm in which believers are baptized. If one sees the instrumental of agency, then πνεύματι is the “agent of baptism to membership in the Body” (167).

174Ibid., 169. His arguments include: 1) the work of Christ by His Spirit in baptism for consecration of the believer in 1 Cor 6:11; 2) evidence from Acts in which the primitive church saw the fulfillment of messianic baptism in the outpouring of the Spirit and in the “administration of baptism to those responsive to the gospel” and 3) the connection between Gal 3:27 and this verse which link “baptism to Christ with baptism to the Church.”

175Ibid., 170.
water-baptism, but it does not refer to water-baptism as a salvific act of the Spirit through water-baptism.

Fee provides a lengthy discussion on this verse. He suggests that Paul is not referring to water-baptism in any way in this text.176 His argument, which looks upon ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι as locative, places the emphasis upon conversion when the believer is “immersed in the Spirit.”177

Although Fee’s emphasis on conversion is admirable, one must ask if his diligent denial is justified. Paul understands the symbolism of water-baptism (Rom 6:3-11).178 As Fee concedes, however, “the point of reference for the metaphor would be their own baptism (immersion) in water.”179 Fee himself indicates the association between baptism and the reception of the Spirit, which is the “crucial ingredient” of conversion.180 It is therefore reasonable that Paul refers to conversion, calling to his readers’ minds their water-baptism, when he writes ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς

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177Ibid., 605.


179Ibid., 604 n. 24.

180Ibid., 604.
πάντες εἰς ἐν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν.

The significance of this discussion is that Spirit-baptism incorporates believers into the "body of Christ." Water-baptism is the visible demonstration of this incorporation. Bruce suggests that "faith-union with Christ brought [H]is people into membership of the Spirit-baptized community, procuring for them the benefits of the once-for-all outpouring of the Spirit at the dawn of the new age, while baptism in water was retained as the outward and visible sign of their incorporation into Christ."181

The call to conversion and community through repentance and baptism provides a transition from Peter’s Pentecost sermon to apostolic community life (Acts 2:41-47). Gaventa points out that Acts 2:38 "provides a transition to the ensuing narrative of the expansion of the Jerusalem [Christian] community."182 Those who submit to baptism as an expression of repentance receive the seal of the Spirit. Conversion which is wrought by the Spirit leads to community of the Spirit in the fellowship of the saints. Thus, the apostle Paul elucidates the preeminent community ethic in


his epistle to the Ephesians: ἐν σώμα καὶ ἐν πνεύμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἑλπίδι τῆς κλησεως ὑμῶν, εἰς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα, εἰς θεός καὶ πατήρ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πάσιν.  

Through this extensive examination of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, and evangelism, the following foundations hopefully are established. First, Pentecost is the historical and theological hinge for the evangelization of postmodern people. God inaugurates a new age in which the church joins the Spirit to evangelize the postmodern world. Second, the Spirit is the epistemological bridge for the objective truth of the gospel in a postmodern context. The Spirit unites ἐλέγχω with the evangelism of the church. Third, Peter’s sermon at Pentecost reveals an example of apostolic κήρυγμα for postmodern people by which the Spirit speaks through the believer to the hearer. The objective reality of the cross and resurrection is the center of evangelistic preaching to postmodern people. The Spirit establishes the conviction of postmodern people that the “truth-claims” of the apostolic κήρυγμα are in fact true. The Spirit leads postmodern people to conversion through repentance and community through baptism.

183"One body and one Spirit, just as also you have been called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who [is] above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6).
CHAPTER THREE

THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNITY IN AN APOSTOLIC APPROACH

An apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people has a community focus. Postmodernism has inaugurated the demise of the “autonomous individual” and given way for the exaltation of community. This creates a specific advantage for the contemporary church following an apostolic approach for evangelism in the postmodern milieu. The influence of community in the postmodern world, however, engenders the notion of truth as a social construct. An apostolic approach depends upon the Spirit as the epistemological bridge toward the access of truth. What, then, is the role of community?

Images of an Apostolic Community

An examination of the biblical images of an apostolic community serves as a starting point for an analysis of the role of community in an apostolic approach.¹

¹Paul Minear, Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 268-69. He proposes ninety-six “analogies” of the church in the NT. This examination is not as exhaustive as Minear’s and
These images, drawn from Acts and Paul’s epistles, reveal an apostolic view of the Christian community. Although this is not an exhaustive examination, the premise of this author is that the images of an apostolic community present an evangelistic focus for the apostolic church.

The most common term for the Christian community in the NT is ἐκκλησία. This is the primary term in Acts. Lohse understands ἐκκλησία to mean the “immer handelt es sich in der Versammlung der christlichen Gemeinde um Gottes heiles Volk,” and the following images reinforce this concept.

Stanley Grenz and John Franke propose that the Trinity provides a fundamental framework for the Christian answer to God’s identity in a postmodern context.

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4Eduard Lohse, Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972), 192. The translation is: “yet even more it [ἐκκλησία] presents itself in the gathering of the Christian church as the holy people of God.” Lohse further writes that the local church can represent completely (vollständig) the Church of Jesus Christ.

5Stanley Grenz and John Franke, Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context
Therefore, as these authors seek to “shape theology in a postmodern context,” they suggest that the Christian community “finds its basis in being and action” within the framework of the Trinity. Paul Minear also indicates that the biblical images of the church point “to a realm in which God and Jesus Christ and the Spirit are at work.” Clowney furthermore proposes that these images “continually relate the church to the triune God.” With this concept in mind, the trinitarian metaphors for the Christian community provide the basis for “being and action” in apostolic approach.

Christ’s Body

The “body of Christ” represents one of the major metaphors for the apostolic community. Paul describes the unity of the body amidst the diversity of the membership.

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6Ibid.


The Spirit “eliminates the old distinctions,” εἰτε Ἰουνάκιοι εἰτε Ἑλληνες εἰτε ἕλευθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἑποτίσθημεν (1 Cor 12:13). The elimination of these symbols of alienation presents an answer to the postmodern quest.

Baudrillard suggests that the postmodern desire for “relationality” emerges from the “fractal stage” of values, which is the “haphazard proliferation and dispersal of value” so that there is “no law of value.”

Good is no longer the opposite of evil, nothing can now be plotted on a graph or analysed in terms of abscissas and ordinates. Just as each particle follows its own trajectory, each value or fragment of value shines for a moment in the heavens of simulation, then disappears into the void along a crooked path that only rarely happens to intersect with other such paths. This is the pattern of the fractal — and hence the current pattern of our culture.

This postmodern pattern produces a desire for “otherness,”

1997), 288. Each member of the community relates to other members as an organic whole called the “body of Christ.”

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10Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 606. The translation is “whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free persons, and we all have been made to drink one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13).


12Ibid., 5.

13Ibid., 6.
which for Baudrillard is “getting beyond alienation.”  

Here, Baudrillard’s solution is to pursue “radical otherness” in which alienation becomes “definitively other.” In this way, the individual loses “any trace of my own.” Baudrillard’s solution heralds back to Nietzsche’s exaltation of the “free spirit.”

This “relationality” within an apostolic community theologically reflects the “relationality” within the Trinity. Jenson suggests that trinitarian doctrine begins with the premise that “God’s relations to us are internal to [H]im.” Therefore, as Grenz and Franke suggest, the apostolic community provides “the foretaste of the new humanity” who “represent God in the midst of the fallenness of the present through relationships that reflect God’s own loving character.” As Baudrillard concludes, the “Object” is the answer to alienation, even though he equates “radical

\[\text{Ibid., 172-73.}\]

\[\text{See the previous examination of Nietzsche, “Introduction,” 3-6.}\]


\[\text{S. Grenz and J. Franke, \textit{Beyond Foundationalism}, 201.}\]
otherness” of the individual, which is beyond “the Other.”19 From an apostolic approach, this “Object” is community with God through Christ. The image of the “body of Christ,” therefore, presents an apostolic answer to the postmodern quest for an escape from alienation.

The “relationality” of the “body of Christ” proceeds to a specific application of purpose; namely, to be used by God (1 Cor 12:18).20 Dunn suggests that “there is no such thing as passive membership.”21 Active membership involves the fulfillment of specific functions within Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:27-28). Each member of the σῶμα Χριστοῦ has a function to fulfill for the edification of the whole.22 The contention of this writer is that each member’s function corresponds to the leadership and priorities of Christ Jesus who is the head of His body.

The concept of ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σῶματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας (Col

19Baudrillard, Transparency of Evil, 173-74.

20Ben Witherington III, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 259.


1:18) promotes the conviction that the leadership of the ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σῶματος is the priority of the apostolic community. Paul declares that Christ ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀδράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως (Col 1:15). Furthermore, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν (Col 1:17). In this way, the apostle describes the centrality and supremacy of Christ in the cosmic world as the source and origin of all things.

Paul’s description of Christ as ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σῶματος also points to the relationship between the head and the body. The community of faith “draws its life from [H]im to whom it is united.” The apostolic community exists as Christ’s body through Christ’s reconciling work. As ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα (Col 1:16), so also δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα ἐἰς αὐτόν (Col 1:20). Alienation between God and His...
creation becomes reconciliation through Christ.\textsuperscript{28}

The connection between the reconciling work of Christ and the evangelistic emphasis of Christ’s body is further amplified through Paul’s description in verses 21 through 29. Paul Minear writes:

The forgiveness that had become effective within the Christian community was seen as the beginning of a process that would continue until it had achieved its goal not only within the church but also throughout creation. (Vs. 20-23) Those who to this end shared the redemptive sufferings of the Messiah were carrying out a ministry for the body, thus making God’s word more fully known. (Vs. 24-28)\textsuperscript{29}

Paul’s concern is for God’s reconciling work through Christ to permeate the world through the apostolic mission.\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, Eduard Schweizer states that “the church is understood as the body of Christ because of its obedience to its Head. The church manifests itself in the mission to the nations.”\textsuperscript{31}

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\textsuperscript{28}F. F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 74-75.

\textsuperscript{29}P. Minear, Images of the Church, 213.


The image of Christ’s body reveals that the apostolic community is the presence of Christ on mission. In an apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people, the image of Christ’s body presents the priority of evangelism, for Christ’s body naturally follows the leadership of the Head, who is Christ Jesus. Christ’s purpose of reconciliation answers the postmodern quest for escape from alienation. As an extension of Christ’s ministry, the church today recognizes its mission of evangelism in the postmodern setting. The function of an apostolic community is to evangelize the world as an extension of Christ’s ministry.

God’s People

A second image for the apostolic community is the “people of God.” The apostolic community represents the gathering of the followers of Christ as God’s holy people, set apart by the Spirit to accomplish the purposes of God in Jesus Christ. As such, “Christians were heirs to the Jewish conception of the people of God as ‘brothers and Body consisting of believers, in which [H]e [Jesus Christ] dwells on earth through [H]is Spirit.”

E. Lohse, Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments, 192.
sisters.’”33 This language reveals the “relationality” within the community of faith between God and His people and between individual members of the community.

Once again, as with the “body of Christ,” the postmodern quest for “relationality” finds fulfillment in this trinitarian image of the apostolic community. Derrida’s concept of hospitality helps elucidate this postmodern quest. Derrida calls for absolute hospitality.34 He proposes hospitality which gives place (donne lieu) “without demanding that he give his name or enter into some reciprocal pact.”35 Through this process of “absolute hospitality,” Kearney suggests that the host must “allow some way for the absolute other to enter our home, family, nation, state.”36 The role of “absolute hospitality”


35Ibid.

presents an answer to the postmodern quest for identity and legitimation.\textsuperscript{37} An apostolic conception of the "people of God" provides an answer to Derrida's call for absolute hospitality.

Paul uses νοΣ θεου and κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι to describe the "people of God."\textsuperscript{38} Paul declares that those in Christ, ἀρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι (Gal 3:29).\textsuperscript{39} He suggests elsewhere, ei δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι· κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ (Rom 8:17).\textsuperscript{40} The picture of κληρονόμοι is one of inheritance. Those who are εἰν Χριστῷ inherit the promises of God because they are συγκληρονόμοι Χριστοῦ.\textsuperscript{41} As Christ is τὸ σπέρματί of Abraham (Gal 3:16), ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ have become grafted into the promises of God to Abraham through Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{42}

An apostolic community in a postmodern world is a

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 112.

\textsuperscript{38}Douglas Moo, \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 504 n. 41.

\textsuperscript{39}“Then you are of the seed of Abraham, heirs according to promise.”

\textsuperscript{40}“If then children [of God], also heirs; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs of Christ.”

\textsuperscript{41}D. Moo, \textit{Epistle to Romans}, 505.

community of faith. “Relationality” in the apostolic community comes διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 3:26).

Derrida’s call for “absolute hospitality” is a call for the alien-other to be provided an avenue into community. This avenue for community is found διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Πίστις is not only the avenue into the family of God, but it is also the avenue to a community that hopes in the work of Christ in the present mission and future eschaton.  

David Hay suggests that ancient Greek, Jewish, and Christian writers use πίστις to denote the “pledge” or “evidence” to base a belief. Hay, therefore, concludes that in Gal 3:23 and 25, πίστις “means ‘the objective ground of faith.’ Jesus is the decisive evidence or pledge given humankind by God which makes faith possible.” The incredulity of postmodern people confronts the πίστις τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Lohse writes, “Der Glaube erkennt das Evangelium in den Sinn als wahr an, dass es als Heilsbotschaft und Zuspruch der Bettung fortan das ganze Leben der Glaubenden fortan das ganze Leben der Glaubenden.


45Ibid., 471.
bestimmt."⁴⁶ The foundation of πίστις τού Χριστοῦ produces a transformation in the orientation of a postmodern person. In this way, evangelism in an apostolic approach connects postmodern people with the revelation of the gospel so that they make individual decisions based upon “the objective ground of faith” in Jesus Christ as God’s pledge to them.

The apostolic community as the “people of God” finds “relationality” in Christ as the κληρονόμοι apart from the rite of circumcision or Judaism (Gal 3:26-29).⁴⁷ The promise of the Spirit πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐἰς μακράν (Acts 2:39; 11:15-18) bears resemblance to Paul’s argument.⁴⁸ The “people of God” comprises all genders, social standing, and ethnicity.

The evangelistic emphasis of this apostolic image of the Christian community of faith centers upon the avenue through which postmodern people may become God’s people. The “people of God” refers to the apostolic community whose

⁴⁶E. Lohse, “Emuna und Pistis,” Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 68 (1977): 153. “Faith considers the gospel as true in the sense that it, as the message of salvation and encouragement, determines hereafter the entire life of faithfulness.”


All people of every cultural, racial, and social background may enter into the apostolic community through faith in Christ, answering Derrida’s call for “absolute hospitality” and the postmodern quest for “relationality.”

The Spirit’s Temple

The image of the temple of the Holy Spirit presents the third trinitarian metaphor of the apostolic community. Stanley Grenz insightfully indicates that the OT conception of the temple is “God’s earthly dwelling place.” After the coming of the Spirit, however, “the focus of the Spirit’s presence is no longer a special building, but a special people” whom He possesses.

Stephen alludes to this image when he declares, ἄλλος οὐχ ἴδιος ἐν χειροποίητος κατοικεῖ (Acts 7:48). De Silva suggests that the first six chapters of Acts describes “the


presence and activity of God’s Holy Spirit in the midst of the community."\(^\text{53}\) The church as the “temple of the Spirit” portrays “the place of presence for the risen Lord.”\(^\text{54}\)

This image presents “relationality” as distinctive from postmodern pluralism. Paul uses this image as a warning “against compromise with heathen society” (2 Cor 6:14-18).\(^\text{55}\) Paul writes, μὴ γίνεσθε ἐτερογνωμονεῖτε ἀπίστους (v. 14) . . . ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμέν ζώντος (v. 16).\(^\text{56}\) The πιστῶ (v. 15) refers to the community of faith,\(^\text{57}\) and ἀπίστους

\(^{53}\)D. A. de Silva, Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity, 292-93.


\(^{56}\)“Do not become mismated with unbelievers” (v. 14) . . . “for we are the temple of the living God” (v. 16). The ἡμεῖς in verse 16 refers to individual believers and to the community. See Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament (London: Chapman, 1971), 214.

refers to pagan worshipers in Corinth.⁵⁸ Thus, there can be no συγκατάθεσις ναῶ θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων (v. 16).⁵⁹ Paul warns against “becoming spiritually linked” with pagan worship.⁶⁰

Thus, an apostolic community relates to the postmodern world in a distinctive fashion. The church, which relates to the postmodern world, must not “become spiritually linked” with the philosophies of postmodernity which defile the distinctiveness of the community. The postmodern quest for pluralism calls for “agreement” between the “temple of the Spirit” and other religious narratives. Lakeland, who writes for a postmodern theology, declares that such a theology will “reflect the open-ended, pluralistic, pragmatic, and tentative nature of the postmodern world.”⁶¹ Lakeland suggests that the church in the postmodern setting must “embrace the spirit of the age.”⁶² To accomplish this task, Lakeland relegates the


⁵⁹“Agreement by the temple of God with idols.”

⁶⁰Ben Witherington III, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 405.

⁶¹See, Paul Lakeland, Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), 86.

⁶²Ibid.
mission of the church to “pluralistic discourse” which seeks “consensus.”

The necessity of consensus leads Lakeland to conclude that “Christ will not be in the foreground of Christian mission in the postmodern world,” but He “will be the distinctive element ‘behind’” the mission. Is this not the fulfillment of Paul’s warning in 2 Corinthians 6?

According to Fung, the trinitarian images of the apostolic community point to the “relationality” between the church and God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. This writer suggests a modification of Fung’s conclusion. The self-conception of the apostolic community includes the relation to the world as well; therefore, the conclusion would be that the images reflect the “relationality” between the church and God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to the world.

The application of this self-conception to the contemporary scene compels the Christian community to conceive this single reality in a postmodern world. The church lives in connection with God’s redemptive actions in Christ as the mission of the church among postmodern people.

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63Ibid., 102.
64Ibid., 108.
Through this work of God in the apostolic community, the church seeks to continue Christ’s priority and mission of “self-giving liberation of men for their true future.” Moltmann further declares, “Then, as the community of the cross it consists of the fellowship of the kingdom . . . it spreads the feast without end.”

An apostolic community in a postmodern world is “not a casual collection of some individuals with more or less common religious convictions,” but it is the “mediated presence of God in the world.” As Webber puts it, “The goal of the church is to be a divine standard, a sign of God’s incarnational presence and activity in history. In a postmodern world the most effective witness to a world of disconnected people is the church that forms community and embodies the reality of the new society.”

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67 Ibid.


Transformation of Worldviews

An apostolic approach focuses on the transformation of worldviews from postmodern to Christian through the apostolic community. A worldview, according to Charles Kraft, presents “the central systematization of conceptions of reality . . . from which stems their value system.” Wright further suggests that worldviews are “the lens through which the world is seen, the blueprint for how one should live in it, and above all the sense of identity and place which enables human beings to be what they are.”

Middleton and Walsh propose that worldviews “give faith answers to a set of ultimate and grounding questions.” Postmodern people seek the nature of reality, the purpose for life, the reason and cause for evil in the world, and the path to wholeness.

At the conclusion of Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, he calls to the hearers: σώθητε ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς τῆς σκολιὰς ταύτης

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71 Charles Kraft, Christianity and Culture (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 53.


73 J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 11.
Through the use of the preposition ἀπὸ, Peter calls his hearers a conversion of worldviews. Peter promotes salvation from the worldview embraced and embedded in the culture of their world (τὴν γενεὰν τῆς σκολίας ταύτης). In this way, conversion creates a “paradigm shift” in which an individual emerges into a “new mode of life occasioned by a self-involving participation in the shared life, language, and paradigm of the believing community.”

Such a transformation is welcome in the postmodern milieu. Brian Walsh writes that the worldview of modernity is currently at a stage of incredulity. Such incredulity promotes “the gravest sort of anxiety” for the postmodern person. The postmodern person, in general terms, searches for an option better than the modern worldview or the

74“Be delivered from this crooked race.”


anxiety caused by its demise. This writer proposes that the apostolic approach presents a worldview that meets the postmodern challenge of “profound disorientation in which nothing seems to cohere.”

The summary statement of Acts 2:42 demonstrates the transformation of worldviews by which an apostolic community provides the interpretation of life through the lens of the apostles’ doctrine and through the koinōnia of the community. Luke records the work of the church when he writes, ἢσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

The Significance of the Apostles’ Doctrine

The apostles’ doctrine provides the process by which the apostolic church transforms worldviews. This writer contends that τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων is divine revelation which defines the way life should be. It is the definition of the “true life” inscribed by the Spirit of truth. Postmodern people reject such a “totalizing” statement as an oppressive metanarrative, yet the intent of


80“But they were attending constantly to the teaching of the apostles and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers” (Acts 2:42).

81See previous chapter on “The Holy Spirit: The Bridge for the Objective Truth of the Gospel.”
the apostolic approach is to deconstruct postmodern incredulity of the gospel and to re-construct a worldview in concert with the doctrine of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

An examination of τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων demonstrates its connection with the doctrine of Christ. William Neil proposes that τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων refers to the “words and works of Jesus as later incorporated in the Gospels.”82 Rengstorf concludes that τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων refers to the proclamation of Christ’s διδαχή by those whom He has sent into the world.83 The premise of this section is that the doctrine of Christ is the apostles’ doctrine. James Sawyer suggests that the apostles’ teaching serves as the mediation between Christ and the church.84 Therefore, “the church is only faithful to its calling as it perseveres in the teaching and tradition of the apostles, who constitute the human link with Jesus.”85

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The historical distance, however, between the postmodern world and \( \text{ἡ διδαχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων} \) presents a problem of truth and authority for postmodern people. Scripture bridges the historical distance, and the Spirit works through Scripture to resolve the issues of truth and authority. Bruce concludes that “New Testament scriptures form the written deposit of the apostolic teaching.”

Certainly, the earliest documents of the NT are letters from apostles which apply Christ’s teaching. The Gospels comprise the “written transcripts of the Gospel” so that \( \text{ἡ διδαχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων} \) “might be preserved.”

Thus, \( \text{ἡ διδαχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων} \) inextricably coincides with evangelism. Jesus commissions His followers in Matthew 28:19-20:

\[
\text{πορευόμενοι ὑμεῖς μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθη, βαπτίζομεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἅγιον πνεῦματος, διδάσκομεν αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετελήσαμεν ὑμῖν.}
\]

The activity of \( \text{διδάσκομεν αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετελήσαμεν ὑμῖν} \) corresponds to the transformation of a life, so that what an individual

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88 “As you go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to fulfill as much as I have commanded to you” (Matt 28:19-20a).
does conforms to what Christ commands. As Blomberg writes, “Teaching obedience to all of Jesus’ commands forms the heart of disciple making. Evangelism must be holistic.” In order for postmodern people to follow Christ, they must be transformed so that their worldview matches Scripture. An apostolic approach promotes this transformation.

Paul describes this transformation in Rom 12:2. Paul joins μὴ to the present imperative, συνχηματίζεσθε, to form an imperative of prohibition. The locative, τῷ αἰῶνι τοῦτῳ, reveals the worldview of “this age” or “the thought patterns extant outside Christianity.” Paul, therefore, encourages the believers to stop conforming themselves to the worldview of τῷ αἰῶνι τοῦτῳ.

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91James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winberry, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (LaCrosse, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 127; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 755. Moo suggests that the voice of the verb could be passive, middle-reflexive, or “most likely . . . a simple (‘intransitive’) active significance -- ‘do not conform.’”

92Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. Siegfried Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 229. The intent of this phrase, according to Schlatter, is that the world “assumes and specifically demands” that individuals “conduct themselves just as it does.”

The passive imperative, μεταμορφοῦσθε, indicates the responsibility for action.94 The instrument of transformation is τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοὸς,95 by which ἀνακαινώσει indicates “a continuing renewal” (see 2 Cor 4:16; Col 3:10). This writer, following Moo, suggests that ἀνακαινώσει “picks up καινότητι πνεύματος (‘newness of Spirit’) from 7:6.” The work of the Spirit provides the avenue ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος (Rom 7:6).96 This is the renewal of the mind by which the Spirit illuminates Scripture, which is the written deposit of τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων. That which is renewed is νοῦς, a noun which points specifically to the worldview of an individual.97

In an apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people, τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων provides the avenue.

49 (Fall 1987): 363.


95See Brooks and Winberry, Syntax of New Testament Greek, 44-45.

96“So that we might serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

through which the community of faith leads postmodern people to a transformation of their worldview.\footnote{Herman A. Hoyt, “A Genuine Christian Non-Conformity: Romans 12:2,” Grace Journal 8 (Winter 1967): 7.} Moo cogently summarizes the transformation of worldview when he writes: “Christians are to adjust their way of thinking about everything in accordance with the ‘newness’ of their life in the Spirit (cf. 7:6).\footnote{D. Moo, Epistle to the Romans, 756-757.}

Schnelle suggests that εἰναι ἐν Χριστῷ designates the “newness of life” as a “neuen Seins und Lebens.”\footnote{Udo Schnelle, “Transformation und Partizipation in paulinischer Theologie,” New Testament Studies 47 (January 2001): 68.} This new existence and life of believers ἐν Χριστῷ appear “als der Raum, in dem sich seinshafte Veränderungen vollziehen und gelebt werden. Die Getauften sind in allen Lebensäußerungen durch Christus bestimmt, und in ihrer Gemeinschaft gewinnt das neue Sein sichtbar Gestalt.”\footnote{Ibid., 69-70. “. . . as the realm in which personally responsible changes will be fulfilled and lived. The baptized are determined through Christ in all life expressions, and in its community the new existence gains visible shape.”} The apostles’ doctrine, therefore, is the call to conform to the will of God revealed through Jesus Christ “in allen Lebensäußerungen durch Christus.”
An apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people requires the transformation of worldviews. The connection between the community and the transformation of worldviews is found in devotion to the apostles’ doctrine. Postmodernism, however, exalts the process of hermeneutics. The following excursus examines the relationship between hermeneutics and the postmodern resistance to the transformation of worldview through Scripture.

Excursus: Hermeneutics and the Postmodern Challenge

Hermeneutics plays an important role in the premise of postmodernism. Postmodern theorists propose that truth is a product of the community. D. A. Carson suggests that postmodernism “depends not a little on what are perceived to be the fundamental limitations on the power of interpretation.”

Stanley Fish, Richard Rorty, and Jacques Derrida represent three leading voices in postmodern hermeneutics.

Stanley Fish’s “reader-response” approach to hermeneutics presents a leading voice in postmodern theory

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of interpretation.\footnote{Stanley Fish, \textit{Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 1-17.} According to Fish, the meaning of a text is the reader’s response to the text.\footnote{Ibid., 158.} The text is an “entity independent of interpretation” and “is replaced by the texts that emerge” from interpretation within the social setting.\footnote{Ibid., 13.} Fish further indicates that all “interpretation is the source of texts, facts, authors, and intentions.”\footnote{Ibid., 16.} By this endeavor, Fish dismisses foundationalism because it prohibits the reader from “the most remarkable of his abilities, the ability to give the world meaning rather than to extract a meaning that is already there.”\footnote{Ibid., 86.}

According to Fish’s hermeneutical program, one comes to the text to create rather than discover meaning.\footnote{Ibid., 326-27. He proposes that in his model “the reader was freed from the tyranny of the text and given the central role in the production of meaning” (Ibid., 7).} Fish views a text as “an empty, separate domain, awaiting the collective intention that will fill it.”\footnote{William Ray, \textit{Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction} (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 162.}
the only parameter in interpretation is the “point of view” in the interpretive community.\textsuperscript{110} As Culler sees Fish’s proposal, the “notion of ‘what the text says’ itself depends upon common procedures of reading.”\textsuperscript{111} Thus, the different interpretive strategies of exegetical communities make the text speak differently. The readers in their interpretive community is determinative in the creation of meaning.\textsuperscript{112}

Richard Rorty proposes another leading approach in postmodern interpretation which focuses on conversation as hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{113} The assumption of Rorty’s position consists in his concept of the acquisition of truth. He rejects Crispin Wright’s “representationalist” portrayal of the cognitive discourse\textsuperscript{114} which, according to Rorty, views

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110}S. Fish, \textit{Is There a Text in This Class?}, 335-37.
\item \textsuperscript{112}D. A. Carson, \textit{The Gagging of God}, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{114}Crispin Wright, \textit{Truth and Objectivity} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 91-93. Wright indicates that the “representation of facts” incorporates the “correct . . . perspective on the truth predicate” (Ibid., 83). Wright’s contention is that truth is the “output” of the cognitive function of an individual correctly handling the “input” of information. Differences of opinion between two or more individuals concerning the same information is the result of \textit{a priori} “differences of opinion.”
\end{itemize}
“human beings as machines constructed (by God or Evolution) to, among other things, get things right.” Rorty’s approach is “to get rid of that self-image and to replace it with a picture of machines that continually adjust to each other’s behavior, and to their environment, by developing novel kinds of behavior.”¹¹⁵ Rorty’s assumption is that the acquisition of truth is not the goal of discourse.¹¹⁶ Rather, the continual adjustment toward others and the social context is the goal of discourse.¹¹⁷

This “continual adjustment” provides the framework for conversation as “the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood.”¹¹⁸ For Rorty, hermeneutics is the conversation between people who come to the end of their “edifying discourse” with understanding, but who do not seek truth as the goal of the dialogue. Because no vocabulary or text “is closer to reality than another” nor


¹¹⁶Ibid., 3-4. Rorty writes: “Truth is not a goal of inquiry. If ‘truth’ is the name of such a goal then, indeed, there is no truth. For the absoluteness of truth makes it unserviceable as such a goal.”

¹¹⁷Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁸Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 389.
“in touch with a power not herself,”\textsuperscript{119} hermeneutics involves merely “obedience to our own conventions.”\textsuperscript{120}

Rorty seeks to “abandon the courtroom of truth for the carnival of redescription.”\textsuperscript{121} “Redescription” is the process by which one makes something “to look good or bad,” depending upon the goal and context of “language game.”\textsuperscript{122} The ultimate arbiter in hermeneutics is the individual.\textsuperscript{123} Texts and vocabularies are interpreted through conversation and “re-description.” The end-game of hermeneutics for Rorty is to “make something that never had been dreamed of before.”\textsuperscript{124} This hermeneutical process results in a pragmatic, “whatever works best” interpretation.

In this way, according to Rorty, “hermeneutics is


\textsuperscript{120}Richard Rorty, \textit{Consequences of Pragmatism} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xlii.

\textsuperscript{121}Douglas Groothuis, \textit{Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 198.


\textsuperscript{123}Rorty, \textit{Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity}, 97. Rorty suggests that individuals are not judged by any external reality or final vocabularies, but only by themselves.

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
always parasitic” upon epistemology informed “by the culture of the day.” Interpretation is an internal, unconscious need to create “a self” for oneself through a re-description of the “blind impress” of chance upon one’s life. The goal of hermeneutics is to appropriate various options for epistemology, re-describe the context in life, and create “a self” for oneself. Roger Lundin suggests that Rorty’s hermeneutics presents the reader as the “parasite” who seeks “to bring the dead text to life by internalizing it.”

Jacques Derrida’s concept of différance provides another view of the hermeneutical process in postmodern thought. Derrida’s concept of différance is the fulcrum of his deconstruction project. Vanhoozer suggests that “Derrida is an unbeliever in the reliability, decidability, and neutrality of the sign.” Différance is the

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126Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, 43.

127Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony Thiselton, The Promise of Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 41.


129Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 39.
“neologism” which Derrida uses to describe the instability, undecidability, and partiality of language. He suggests that this hermeneutical process is “strategic” because “no transcendent truth . . . can govern theologically the totality of the field.” It is adventurous because it does not move toward a “a telos or theme of domination.”

Derrida conceptualizes self-consciousness as a product of signs and the interminable play of language. The consciousness can only express meaning through a reference to the past (retention) and the future (protention) -- “memory and expectation.” This expression comes from the movement of trace, which is the “arch-phenomenon of memory.” Retention is the movement of the trace within the consciousness that “produces the

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132 Ibid., 64.

133 J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 70. The concept of “trace” is the relationship between the signifier of something in the present and “something other than itself” in the past (retention). It is the relationship between the signifier in the present and a future element (protention).
subject." Protention is the movement of the trace which introduces the “movement of différance,” so that the sign of the present introduces reference to another sign not in the present. The signifier possesses meaning only in relationship with other signifiers. Différance “‘is’ in itself nothing outside of different denominations.”

Derrida’s hermeneutic rejects the possibility of a transcendental “concept signified in and of itself.” Derrida suggests that “the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.” This absence produces “differences and traces of traces.”

The result of Derrida’s hermeneutic is a text with

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134 J. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomenon*, 82.

135 Ibid., 67.

136 Ibid., 44.


“infinite implications.” Derrida’s use of terms with “double, contradictory, undecidable value” presents his hermeneutic of *différance*. As Joy notes, Derrida’s use of these terms “insures that neither any past nor future possibilities of meaning can be exhausted” and dismantles “univocity by exploiting plurivocity” in texts. For Derrida, there can be no final, ultimate meaning of a particular text.

According to Derrida, the movement of *différance* overturns “all theologies.” Because no transcendental signified exists, he rejects “la religion du vivant” as a tautology which creates “impératif absolu, loi sainte, loi du salut: sauver le vivant comme l’intact, l’indemne, le sauf *(heilig)*.” Derrida verifies his critique against all

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theologies in his study of Babel.\textsuperscript{146} Derrida views the use of the proper name as the promotion of “logocentrism” — that there is a stable connection between the world and language.\textsuperscript{147} The result of Derrida’s interpretation of Babel, where Babel (confusion) is the proper name for God, is that logocentrism itself is confusion and that “determinate textual interpretation is impossible.”\textsuperscript{148} Ingraffia presents Derrida’s hermeneutic in a theological fashion when he writes: “Instead of the Logos calling humanity into being, humanity calls God into being.”\textsuperscript{149} Derrida, therefore, promotes a hermeneutic which dismisses meaning as indeterminable. Instead, meaning moves through the arbitration of \textit{différance} in the reading and writing of the individual.

Unlike the postmodern hermeneutics of Fish, Rorty, the living” which creates “absolute command, holy law, law of salvation: to save the living as the whole, the protected against harm, the set apart (\textit{holy}).”

\textsuperscript{146}See chapter 2, “Beyond Babel: Epistemology and \textit{έπεραι γλώσσαι},” for more on Derrida’s use of Babel.


or Derrida, an apostolic approach to hermeneutics seeks to transform the postmodern worldview to match the apostolic worldview. Scripture interprets the postmodern person’s life so that he or she may be free “to be fully human.”

Derrida, Rorty, and Fish pursue a hermeneutic which rejects the pretension that exegesis can lead to a “correct view of things.” Yet, encounters with Scripture impinge certain expectations and demands upon the interpreter.

Clarence Walhout, following Alvin Plantinga, proposes that “our hermeneutics needs to be grounded in our warranted beliefs.” In an apostolic approach, these “warranted beliefs” emerge from the text of Scripture (the design plan) as it is interpreted in the “cognitive environment” of the

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Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 22.

Thomas Long, Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 29. Thomas Long writes that “encounters with Scripture itself have built up in the community of faith the expectation of Scripture’s special character, rather than the other way around.”

Lundin, Walhout, Thiselton, Promise of Hermeneutics, 99. Alvin Plantinga, Warrant: The Current Debate (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 213. Plantinga proposes “warranted beliefs” which are based upon “design plan” and “proper function.” He writes: “A thing (organism, organ, system, artifact) is functioning properly when it functions in accord with its design plan, and the design plan of a thing is a specification of the way in which a thing functions when it is functioning properly.”
Grenz and Franke similarly propose the concept of “interpretive framework,” which is “that set of categories, beliefs, and values . . . which forms one’s perception of reality and life.”\textsuperscript{155} The Spirit forms a “communal interpretive framework” through the biblical text that leads individuals to view “all reality in light of an unabashedly Christian and specifically biblical interpretive framework.”\textsuperscript{156}

Postmodern hermeneutics presents the primacy of the social context and the interminable play of language as the arbiter or arbitration of meaning in the hermeneutical process.\textsuperscript{157} Rather than dismissing or veiling authorial intention, this writer suggests that the Spirit illumines the reader of Scripture so that the meaning of the author’s intention is accessible.

Following Wolterstorff’s suggestion of “double

\textsuperscript{154}Alvin Plantinga,\textit{ Warrant and Proper Function} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 82. Plantinga writes that “the design plan does not cover my cognitive faculties in isolation from yours or yours from mine.”

\textsuperscript{155}Grenz and Franke,\textit{ Beyond Foundationalism}, 81.


\textsuperscript{157}K. Vanhoozer,\textit{ Is There a Meaning in This Text?}, 168.
agency discourse,” this writer proposes that the Spirit speaks to the reader through the “appropriated discourse” of the biblical authors.\(^{158}\) Grenz and Franke propose that the Spirit appropriates Scripture “in its internal meaning (i.e., to appropriate what the author said).”\(^{159}\) Vanhoozer proposes the same concept when he suggests that the Spirit does not “change” meaning but “charges” it with relevance “by relating the original content to new contexts.”\(^{160}\)

Illumination actualizes τὴν διδαχὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων in the postmodern setting. In the words of Grenz and Franke, “the Spirit speaks to succeeding generations of Christians through the text.”\(^{161}\) Pinnock warns against the postmodern hermeneutics by which the reader transforms the text and commends illumination by which the Spirit transforms the reader through Scripture.\(^{162}\) Grenz and Franke warn that


\(^{159}\)S. Grenz and J. Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, 73-75. Grenz and Franke, however, critique Wolterstorff’s proposal in terms of authorial intention, which they claim is a “modern tendency to elevate some other reality [the author] above the Bible as text.”

\(^{160}\)K. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 409-415, 421.

\(^{161}\)Grenz and Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, 66.

\(^{162}\)Clark Pinnock, “The Role of the Spirit in Interpretation,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological
illumination leads to subjectivism when biblical authority is reduced “to our subjective reception of the divine address.”  ^163

The concept illumination is found in 1 Cor 2:14. In consideration of this passage, Fuller asserts that unbelievers may understand spiritual things, but cannot welcome the spiritual without the work of the Spirit.  ^164

Erickson, however, suggests that “without the help of the Holy Spirit, they [ψυχικὸς ἀνθρωπὸς] are unable to understand them [τὰ τοὺς πνεῦματος τοῦ θεοῦ].”  ^165 Unlike Fuller, Erickson indicates that only the believer can understand the objective meaning of Scripture through the work of the Spirit in illumination. Erickson indicates that the Spirit of truth elucidates the truth for the apostles and through

^163Grenz and Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, 67.

^164Daniel P. Fuller, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in Biblical Interpretation,” in Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation, eds. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 191-92. He draws this conclusion from the meaning of three key terms: δέχομαι, γινώσκω, and ἀνακρίνω. The first verb, δέχομαι, suggests to Fuller that the “natural man does not welcome the things of the Spirit of God.” The second verb, γινώσκω, indicates that the ψυχικὸς ἀνθρωπὸς does not embrace τὰ τοὺς πνεῦματος τοῦ θεοῦ “as they really are.” The third verb, ἀνακρίνω, reveals that the ψυχικὸς ἀνθρωπὸς cannot evaluate spiritual things.

^165M. Erickson, Christian Theology, 274.
the apostles’ doctrine.\footnote{Ibid., 274.} In this way, the Spirit guides the community of faith into all truth through illumination. As Clowney writes, “The Spirit who communicated through the apostles and prophets the deposit of sound doctrine (1 Tim 6:20, 21; 2 Tim 1:13) also works to illumine our understanding of the truth.”\footnote{E. Clowney, “The Biblical Theology of the Church,” in The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 72.}

Following Vanhoozer, this writer proposes that the text of Scripture has the “mission of meaning.”\footnote{Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 410.} Illumination is the “perlocutionary effect” of τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων by the Spirit.\footnote{Ibid., 410.} The Spirit of truth persuades and convinces the reader of the truth-claims of the Scripture. As Vanhoozer writes, “The Spirit’s leading readers into all truth is a matter of nurturing a Pentecostal conversation about the correct interpretation of the Word’s past meaning and present significance.”\footnote{Ibid., 421.} Illumination does not present the Spirit as a rival author who leads individuals to deconstruct τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων, as with Derrida, or who leads communities to rewrite τῇ διδαχῇ ἀποστόλων, as with...
Rorty or Fish. The Spirit works in concert with Scripture to persuade the reader and produce a transformation. As meaning is “accomplished” in Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the Spirit illumines the believer “so that [the Word] can achieve its intended effect: meaning applied.”

The Spirit’s illumination of Scripture presents the contemporary avenue for the transformation of worldviews in the postmodern context. Illumination in an apostolic hermeneutic is the application of τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἁποστόλων to believers through the Holy Spirit. The contemporary community of faith depends upon the work of the Spirit to lead postmodern people to know and apply what God’s desire. As with the apostolic community in Acts 2:42, this “charismatic teaching” of the Spirit explains the “evident ‘enthusiasm’ and the sense of God’s transforming presence in the congregation.”

The Significance of Κοινωνία

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172 K. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, 429.

The paradigm shift from postmodern thought to a Christian worldview continues through κοινωνία (Acts 2:42). Marshall indicates that κοινωνία refers to “the holding of a common meal or to a common religious experience.”174 Conzelmann indicates that κοινωνία is further defined by the sharing of property as well as the common life of the community (see Acts 4:32).175 This writer proposes that κοινωνία promotes a life of reciprocity in an intimate community of familial ties and friendship in Christ Jesus.176 In other words, κοινωνία represents the ethos of the apostolic community. This ethos includes the activities of τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.177

The grammatical construction of verse 42 places τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων, κοινωνία, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου, and ταῖς προσευχαῖς as four distinct activities. The general consideration of κοινωνία as participation in a “common


177“The breaking of bread” and “prayers.”
religious experience” suggests that τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου and ταῖς προσευχαῖς are elements in κοινωνία.\(^{178}\)

Table fellowship presents an avenue for the transformation of worldview in the postmodern setting. In an apostolic community, the table fellowship allows believers to remember the foundation of their community as the “body of Christ.”\(^{179}\) The celebration of the common meal actualizes the “fellowship of the individual church members in the unity of the body of Christ” for the church.\(^{180}\)

Neyrey indicates that the ceremonial meal serves as a process to “bolster the boundaries defining a group or institution, even as they confirm established roles and statuses within the group.”\(^{181}\) The κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου is an idiom for Jewish ceremony opening a meal in which the host offers


a prayer of blessing and then distributes the provisions from God.\textsuperscript{182} Bruce indicates that this “regular observance” is the precursor to the Eucharist, in which the κλάσις τού ἁρτοῦ is a ceremonial celebration of Christ’s “brokenness in death” for humanity.\textsuperscript{183} The κλάσις τού ἁρτοῦ finds meaning in the “exposition of Christ’s saving deed.”\textsuperscript{184} In turn, the meal strengthens the identity of the community as well as the participant’s role in the community.\textsuperscript{185} Through the common meal, the community celebrates the work of Christ.

This aspect of κοινωνία establishes the nature of Christ’s death as God’s provision of life, promotes the nature of the future with Christ’s imminent return, provides the nature of the blessings received as part of the community, commends the nature of ethics within the community, and commissions individuals for the continuity


and expansion of the community.\textsuperscript{186} Michael Green suggests that “much about the Christian faith is ‘spiritual’ and hard to get a grip on. But eating is the most basic human activity.”\textsuperscript{187} The image of κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου helps the postmodern person visualize the nature of salvation, daily nurture, and future glory in Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, apostolic fellowship includes προσευχή, which denotes the regular petitioning to God for aid.\textsuperscript{188} Falk suggests that Luke records the adoption of Jewish prayer practices including the appointed prayer times.\textsuperscript{189} The connection, however, between κοινωνία and κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου suggests that the devotion to prayer moves beyond the practices of Temple worship.\textsuperscript{190} Indeed, the tight connection of the fellowship suggests that the apostolic community shares prayer together around the celebration of the common

\textsuperscript{186}Ibid., 376-77. This conclusion is drawn from Christ’s farewell meal with His followers as the starting-point of the ceremonial meal of Acts 2:42.

\textsuperscript{187}Michael Green, Evangelism Through the Local Church (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 299-300.

\textsuperscript{188}H. Greeven, s. v. “ἐὐχόμαι,” TDNT, 2:807-808.


\textsuperscript{190}W. Neil, Acts of the Apostles, 81.
meal. An apostolic approach sees this aspect of κοινωνία as an “integral part of the Christian movement” and is related “to the growth of the church.”

DeSilva provides an interesting analysis on the place of prayer in the apostolic community. His model is “God as benefactor.” For the apostolic community, DeSilva suggests that God goes “far beyond the high-water mark of generosity” through the bestowal of reconciliation to His enemies. Furthermore, as the “personal patron to Christians,” God hears and acts upon the specific petitions from “local communities of faith” who enjoy the “privilege of access to God for such timely and specific help.” Prayer, therefore, is “the means by which believers can personally seek God’s favor, and request specific benefactions, for themselves or on behalf of one another.”

The role of τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου and ταῖς προσευχαῖς in apostolic fellowship presents a valuable picture for the

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191 J. Polhill, Acts, 120.
193 D. A. deSilva, Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity, 129.
194 Ibid., 130-31.
195 Ibid., 132.
transformation of worldview in postmodern people. Sally Morgenthaler calls for the increased “vertical and horizontal interaction” in community.\textsuperscript{196} This interaction “provides pathways of contact with a holy and loving God” and “avenues of nurturing, uplifting relationships with those who are called in God’s name.”\textsuperscript{197} Bruce Thede suggests that the evangelization of postmodern people depends upon more participation and interaction in the community.\textsuperscript{198} Morgenthaler indicates that postmodern people are searching for an “escape from the perpetual dehumanizing anonymity” of everyday life.\textsuperscript{199} The common meal and the place of prayer in apostolic fellowship provides such an escape.

For instance, Elmer Towns examines the role of “small-group prayer” during worship. In this approach, the worship leader calls for the congregation to gather in small groups during the worship in order to pray for the needs of one another. Towns writes that this place of prayer

\textsuperscript{196}Sally Morgenthaler, \textit{Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 123.

\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., 123.


\textsuperscript{199}S. Morgenthaler, \textit{Worship Evangelism}, 120.
connects people to the love of God and community for them. Meeks states that “in order to persist, a social organization must have boundaries, must maintain structural stability as well as flexibility, and must create a unique culture.” Through the apostles’ doctrine and κοινωνία, the apostolic church transforms worldviews, establishing the boundaries, structural stability, and unique culture of an apostolic community. It is the connection within the community that provides impetus for transformation.

Furthermore, the distinctive nature of the apostolic community promotes evangelism. Elliott suggests that the community represents “the basic social organization through which the gospel advances from Palestine to Rome.” Through the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, the apostolic community establishes solidarity for the church’s missionary enterprise.

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Apostolic Ethics and Evangelism

The postmodern person desires intimacy and belonging,\textsuperscript{204} which can be found in a community following the pattern of ethics in an apostolic approach.\textsuperscript{205} The apostolic ethics of the community provide a warm environment for the evangelization of postmodern people. This writer seeks to demonstrate the necessity of a commendable community for the evangelization of postmodern people.\textsuperscript{206}

The apostles' doctrine and κοινωνία transform worldviews so that the community becomes “the contemporary embodiment of the paradigmatic biblical narrative.”\textsuperscript{207} Witness occurs through the “way of life” of the community. Nicholas Lash proposes that martyrdom is the “performance or enactment of the biblical text: in its ‘active reinterpretation.’”\textsuperscript{208} In order to overcome the postmodern scepticism of truth, an apostolic approach seeks to


\textsuperscript{205}Thom S. Rainer, Bridger Generation (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 63.


\textsuperscript{207}Ibid., 78-81.

demonstrate the truth of the gospel through the performative interpretation of Scripture in the way-of-life of the apostolic community. In other words, the Christian worldview is “lived-out” through the community of faith, and this presents the “transformative power of Christian ‘martyrdom.”’ Meeks suggests that “making morals means making community.” The premise of this section, however, is that ethics proceed from the demands of the Spirit and the One to whom He bears witness. The Spirit establishes community, and the community adheres to His demands.

The Ethics of Community: Acts 2:44-47 and the Importance of ἀλληλων in Pauline Paraenesis

The description of the apostolic community in Acts presents the ideal paradigm for the ethic of community. Capper and Schmithals indicate that Luke records the summaries to present the Christian community as an ideal community (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-35). These summary

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209 Ibid.

210 Wayne A. Meeks, The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5. The contention of this writer is that the Spirit forms community, and the morals or ethics that proceed from the community proceed from the demands of the Spirit upon the community as revealed through Scripture.

narratives present a paradigm for all Christian communities. The κοινωνία produces the ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ so that the community shares with one another in tangible expressions of love; such as the sale and distribution of personal property to those in need. Unity of the apostolic community leads them to help ἄν τις χρείαν ἐπικεφαλής (Acts 4:35).

T. B. Maston indicates that there are three aspects to the apostolic ethic in Acts: ethic of the Spirit, ethic of fellowship, and ethic of inclusion. The ethic of the Spirit centers on the decision-making within the community of faith recorded specifically in Acts 5:1-11 and 15:1-29. The fellowship ethic focuses upon the “the concept of sharing.” The ethic of inclusion involves the inclusion of Gentiles in the community (Acts 11:1-18). This apostolic ethic presents a paradigm for the contemporary church.

Although the community of goods in Acts 2 and 4 appear as an

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213 Ibid., 35. Luke presents the nature of this unity in the summaries with ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ and ἀπαντᾶ κοινᾶ (2:44); καρδία καὶ ψυχῇ μία and ἀπαντᾶ κοινᾶ (4:32).

occasional concern for the apostolic community, the collection for the poor by Paul and the paraenetic sections of Paul’s epistles extend and amplify the ethic for the Christian community.

Paul describes the apostolic ethic in his exhortation or paraenetic sections of his letters. His use of ἀλλήλων (and ἀλλήλους) demonstrates this ethic. Following the pattern of Christ, an apostolic ethic focuses on love.215

Phil 2:1-4 specifically reveal the principle of love in the apostolic ethic of the community.216 In verse 3, Paul presents the ethic: μὴ δὲν κατ’ ἐρμθείαν μὴ δὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν ἄλλα τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἄλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχουσιν ἑαυτῶν.217 Schnabel indicates that this “modest self-assessment” calls for each member of the community to seek the “advantage of his fellow believers” above personal benefit.218 This is the


216See also the ethic of humility in Rom 12:10. Paul writes, τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ εἰς ἄλλήλους φιλόστοργοι, τῇ τιμῇ ἄλλήλους προηγούμενοι. The translation is: “Loving dearly one another with brotherly love, outstretching one another with honor.” Here, προηγούμενοι indicates the desire to be the best at giving honor to one another. BAGD, s. v. “προηγέομαι,” 706.

217“Nothing according to ambition and not according to vanity, but with humility considering the others better than himself.”

principle of love as sacrificial service for one another.

Christ is the pattern for the ethic of love (Phil 2:5-11). Beginning with the conception of Christ’s preexistence (ὁς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων),219 the logic of the hymn moves to the One who ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν and σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἀνθρωπος (Phil 2:7).220 This logic presents “prior existence as God.”221 Christ “freiwillig arm wurde und ein Dasein in Machtlosigkeit und Entehrung wählte.”222 Christ “ein Mensch wurde (V. 7c.d) und im Gehorsam gegen den Willen Gottes den Weg der Erniedrigung ging: den Weg an das Kreuz (V. 8).”223 The apostolic ethic of sacrificial service

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220 “He emptied himself receiving the form of a slave” and “being found in outward appearance as a man.”

221 G. Fee, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, 203.

222 Otfried Hofius, Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6-11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 63. The translation is: “voluntarily became poor and chose an existence in powerlessness and dishonor.”

223 Ibid. “[He] became a man (v. 7c.d) and in obedience toward the will of God went the way of

Obedience to Christ’s command to love one another sacrificially, as well as following His example, gains attentive ears as the apostolic community considers the lordship of Christ.

In Eph 4:32, Paul once again utilizes ἀλλήλους to depict the ethic of the apostolic community. As Schnackenberg concisely indicates, “‘zueinander,’ unterstreicht die Verpflichtung zur Gemeinschaft.” Relationally, this commitment to the community involves

humiliation: the way by the cross (v. 8).”

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224 Ralph Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 289-91. Martin argues against such an ethical interpretation of this hymn, proposing instead that the purpose of the hymn in the midst of Paul’s ethical instruction is to call the community to live worthy of Christ’s *kenosis*, death, and exaltation. His conclusion, however, does not militate against the ethic of community toward one another. Indeed, his conclusion only strengthens the portrait of this ethic.


226 Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 10 (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 215. “‘To one another,’ underscores the commitment to the community.”
χρηστότης,227 εὐσπλαγχνος,228 and χαριζόμενος.229 Each of these virtues proceeds eἰς ἀλλήλους in an apostolic community. Thus, “Aus Güte (χρηστότης) wächst barmherzige Gesinnung (εὐσπλαγχνοι) und daraus der Wille zur Vergebung.”230 The principle of love is goodness, compassion, and forgiveness eἰς ἀλλήλους. The pattern for the apostolic ethic of forgiveness eἰς ἀλλήλους is: καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἔχαρίσατο ὑμῖν.231 God’s forgiveness in Christ becomes the pattern by which believers forgive one another. Barth rightly suggests that “those who are forgiven” are “witnesses to God’s grace” by the exemplary manner of their communal relationships.232

Col 3:12-13 present additional virtues: ταπεινοφροσύνη (humility), πραΰτης (gentleness), and μακροθυμία

227 BAGD, s. v. “χρηστότης,” 886. The term indicates goodness or generosity toward others.

228 H. Köster, s. v. “σπλάγχνον κτλ.,” TDNT, 7:548-49, 555-57. The term points to a deep feeling of compassion.

229 Markus Barth, Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 4-6, Anchor Bible 34a (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 523-24. The term indicates the activity of forgiveness toward others.

230 R. Schnackenburg, Der Brief an die Epheser, 215. “From goodness (χρηστότης) grows a merciful attitude (εὐσπλαγχνοι) and from that the will to forgiveness.”

231 “As God in Christ forgave you.” The aorist use of χαρίζωμαι refers to God’s forgiveness, and the present tense χαριζόμενοι refers to the saint’s forgiveness.

232 M. Barth, Ephesians 4-6, 525.
(patience).  

Paul then writes, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς (Col 3:13).  

Such a construction is “characteristic of extended ethical injunctions in the NT.”  

The apostolic ethic calls for “mutual tolerance” as well as mutual forgiveness. Once again, the key to apostolic ethic is found in Christ: καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἔχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς (Col 3:13).  

As ἀγάπη is the σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος (Col 3:14), the apostolic ethic finds tangible expression. Paul’s use of ἀγαπή with ἀλλήλων indicates the reciprocity of love.  

This love produces spiritual strengthening of one another. This edification involves the pursuit of τὰ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς τῆς

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234 “Bearing with one another and forgiving one another.” The term, ἀνεχόμενοι, is an admonition to the community to extend love to one another willingly. H. Schlier, s. v. “ἀνέχω κτλ.,” TDNT, 1:359.

235 F. F. Bruce, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians, 155 n. 134. Here the present participles are utilized in the sense of a command.

236 “Just as the Lord forgave you, in the same manner also you.”

237 “Love, which is the bond of completeness.”

238 Paul exhorts the community to ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους in Rom 13:8 and 1 Thess 3:12, 4:9, 18.
Spiritual edification involves the ethical imperative, ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε (Gal 6:2).242 As a community ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ (Eph 4:2),243 the nature of Christ’s love calls for “helping out those fellow members whose load is too heavy for them to bear alone.”244 Helping others overcome the temptation to sin is part of the ethic. Fung indicates that τὰ βάρη euphemistically points to a

239“The things for the building up of one another.”


241Abraham J. Malherbe, The Letters to the Thessalonians, Anchor Bible 32b (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 278. Paul’s exhortation, “comfort one another,” focuses upon the eternal association of all who are in Christ, even those who have already died. It further points to the comfort of Christ’s return.


243“Bearing with one another in love.”

244James D. G. Dunn, Galatians, 321.
believer’s lapse into sin. In this way, the apostolic community joins together to offer spiritual strength to one another.

Other tangible expressions of the principle of love in apostolic ethics include προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς προσελάβετο ἵμας (Rom 15:7). The exhortation informs the relationship between the δυνατοὶ and the ἀδύνατοι in Rome. Black suggests that the ἀδύνατοι are Jewish Christians whose dietary rituals caused them to condemn those who did not follow their ceremonial laws. The δυνατοὶ are the Gentile Christians who condemned the ἀδύνατοι for their legalism. Paul’s exhortation is for mutual acceptance within the apostolic community. As Christ received them, they should receive one another in community.

The apostolic approach for the evangelization of

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246 “You receive one another, just as Christ received you.”

247 David Alan Black, Paul, Apostle of Weakness: Astheneia and Its Cognates in the Pauline Literature (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 198-206. Moo does not draw such a tight distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians as the identification of the “strong” and the “weak,” but he rightly indicates that the “dividing line between these two groups was basically the issue of the continuing applicability of the Jewish law.”

248 D. Moo, Epistle to the Romans, 873-75.
postmodern people depends upon a community which follows the principle of Christ’s love for one another as exemplified by Christ Himself. Thus, the principle of apostolic ethics is love and the pattern is Christ.

The Postmodern Need for Intimacy

The postmodern need for intimacy presents a connecting link between the gospel and postmodernism. In the postmodern world, individuals possess a hunger for community and connection. An apostolic approach seeks to bring ideal community to the hearts of postmodern people. Indeed, as Leonard Sweet suggests, “relationship issues stand at the heart of postmodern culture.”

Kenneth Gergen notes that postmodernism leads individuals into “a state of continuous reconstruction.” In the flux of interminable meaning, postmodern people seek “a self-identity within a connectional framework of neighborliness, civic virtue, and spiritual values.”

Middleton and Walsh indicate that postmodern people

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251 L. Sweet, Post-Modern Pilgrims, 115.
exist in a state of “radical” homelessness. The deconstruction of metanarrative is also the deconstruction of reality. As such, postmodern people are “submerged in a world of disorder, senselessness, and madness.” They exist in a state of exile, searching for intimacy in a world of violence and isolation.

Postmodern people, in turn, yearn for community that embodies “wholesome, authentic, and healing relationships.” Rorty’s espousal of a communal view of understanding promotes the community as the creator of identity, meaning, and value for the individual. Rorty suggests that in a world with contingencies rather than truth “loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark” is a more appropriate pursuit than the pursuit of truth or the goal of “getting things right.”

Being informed by the “epistemic undecidability” of

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252 Middleton and Walsh, Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be, 145-46.


255 Rorty, Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth, 38; idem., Essays on Heidegger and Others, 163.

256 Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism, 166.
postmodernism, Winquist suggests that “we can no longer develop an ethic in itself.” By this, Winquist embraces a postmodern skepticism toward any claim to a universal, absolute ethic. In response to this “epistemic undecidability,” Winquist proposes “paraethics.” He describes “paraethics” as a “belief that life is less beautiful when people are oppressed and disenfranchised.” “Paraethics” seeks to “determinitorialize” texts, so that no text has a privileged place. With “perspectives that are never absolute,” Winquist proposes that the “becoming of paraethics” is love. This love, however, is “contingent on place and time” and subject to the “finite experience” of relative context. The context of the individual, therefore, informs and directs the becoming of “paraethics.”

In the view of this writer, an apostolic approach presents a more constructive avenue of ethics. Being informed by the apostolic community of the NT, an apostolic approach seeks to embody the principle of love in Christ. Rather than allowing the world of contingencies to dictate

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258 Ibid., 146.

259 Ibid., 146-47.

260 Ibid., 148-50.
and direct the ethics in which one engages, apostolic ethics allows the paradigm of Christ unveiled by the Spirit of truth to dictate and direct moral principles and obligations. An apostolic approach, therefore, speaks with “decidability” to the postmodern need for intimacy.

Helmut Anselm describes the necessity of an ethical response to the postmodern generation. Anselm indicates that the postmodern generation is an ethical community which needs a stable, concrete way of life. Postmodern ethics is “virtuell” -- “Sie selbst aber ist ‘invisibilis,’ unsichtbar, besistzt keine strukturierenden Institutionen und keine eigenen Organisationsformen.” Citing Bauman’s negative view of the postmodern “way-of-life,” Anselm suggests: “die Postmoderne macht uns zu ‘Landstreichen’ im Land der Werte, ethische unbefriedigt, moralisch heimatlos und immer auf der Suche nach dem Anderen, dem Neuen.”

This evaluation necessitates that the church is to provide a

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261 Ibid., 142-43.


263 Ibid., 133. “It itself, however, is ‘invisible,’ unseeable, possesses no structured institution and no specific form of organization.”

264 Ibid., 129. “The postmodern creates us as “hoboes” in a land of values, ethically unsatisfied, morally homeless and always on the search for the other, the new.”
stable, concrete “way-of-life.” This concrete ethic is built upon the principle of love and the pattern of Christ. Anselm calls for a movement in the church from “virtuelle Ethik-Community” dominated by speeches and theories. He suggests that “kann man den Jugendlichen nicht durch Reden vermitteln, sondern nur durch eigenes Tun, nicht durch Theoretisieren, sondern durch Praktizieren.”

The practice of an apostolic approach follows the principle of love and the pattern of Jesus Christ modeled by the apostolic church in Acts and in Paul’s use of ἀλλήλων. The ethic of community focuses upon the ethic of Christ, which is not a theory, but an active engagement of others.

The Commendable Community and Evangelism, Acts 2:47, 5:13

A community following an apostolic approach to ethics provides a commendable community for people in a postmodern setting. Stanley Hauerwas posits that all human relationships are “splintered and tribal existence” in comparison to a church which reflects an apostolic ethic. An apostolic community of love in Christ satisfies the

Ibid., 135. “One cannot however mediate to the youth through speeches, but only through specific action, not through theories, but through practice.”

postmodern yearning for intimate connection. This writer proposes that the commendable community of an apostolic approach to ethics energizes the evangelistic ministry in the postmodern world.

The ethic of the apostolic community produces χάριν πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν (Acts 2:47).267 “As a result of this, the young community grew day by day, as more and more Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah and were thus saved.”268 Indeed, a commendable community which embraces the ethic of the apostolic community enhances the evangelistic effectiveness in a postmodern world.269 An apostolic approach calls for the community of faith to demonstrate the love of Christ toward one another.

Following the divine judgment on Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), ἐμεγάλυνεν αὐτοὺς ὁ λαός (Acts 5:13b).270


270 “The people praised them.”
The setting of this verse appears “anti-evangelistic.” D. R. Schwartz proposes that the tension between the admiration of the people and their fear kept prospective converts from union with the apostolic community through the contribution of personal property. Bruce also indicates that these deaths dissuaded all but the totally committed from joining the community. C. C. Torrey, however, considers λοιπῶν to refer to the Jewish religious leaders and καλλάσθαι to the arrest of the Christians. This writer follows Marshall who proposes the intent of the verse is: “unbelieving Jews kept away from the Christians.”

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272“But no one of the rest had courage to unite with them.”


275C. C. Torrey, “The ‘Rest’ in Acts v. 13,” *Expository Times* 46 (1934-1935): 428-29. He takes καλλάσθαι as “to seize.” The religious leaders did not dare arrest the members of the apostolic community because of their favor and high-esteem by ὁ λαὸς.

The fear of “half-hearted” allegiance to the apostolic community provides a corrective to the social ministry in which it engaged. The provision for ἄν τις κρείαν εἰκεν most likely attracted a large following in Jerusalem. The incident with Ananias and Sapphira, however, caused those who were looking for physical needs to evaluate their true commitment to Christ. Unless they were willing to submit to the Spirit’s power, they kept their distance.277

Nevertheless, even those who feared participation in the apostolic community “could not help praising them as they were impressed by what they did.”278 In fact, the ethic of the commendable community, especially when joined with the powerful demonstrations of God’s presence and power, led to the growth of the community (Acts 5:14). Vaughan proposes that the purity of the community and the obvious presence of the Lord promotes the growth of the church.279

R. Daniel Shaw suggests that the church in the postmodern world must utilize specific ministry to those who are in need as she evangelizes of postmodern individuals.280

277Polhill, Acts, 164.
An apostolic approach seeks such an holistic approach. An apostolic community responds to the practical as well as spiritual needs of its members (Acts 4:32, 34-35; 6:1-6). Evangelism and social action join together as a powerful witness to the postmodern world. Trites writes: “Such an unselfish, caring fellowship was undeniably attractive to the pagan world, and it still is.”

This is not to say that a commendable community “makes true” the gospel. Hauerwas appears to present such a conclusion when he suggests that “the truthfulness” of a story “is known by the kind of community [it] should form.”

Dennis Hollinger rightly proposes that the church, as “a visible, corporate expression” of the gospel, serves as a witness in the postmodern world. Unlike Hauerwas, this writer proposes that the truthfulness of the gospel is inherent in its nature as divine revelation and witness.

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282 Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 52-55, 95-97.

283 Dennis Hollinger, “The Church as Apologetic: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective,” in Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World, eds. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 182-93. He proposes that the “plausibility structure” for the gospel is a “holy, loving, just, forgiving, life-giving community” which reflects the principle of love and the pattern of Christ (Ibid., 190). “Plausibility structure” is a “social structure which manifests the worldview of a people” (Ibid., 186).
The Spirit of truth bridges the truth of the gospel to postmodern people. Yet, in evangelism, the community’s actions join with the Spirit’s witness to Christ. Berger proposes that the “reality of the gospel is mediated” through the faith-community modeling the apostolic ethic.\textsuperscript{284} As such, an apostolic approach presents a model for life within community which postmodern people seek.\textsuperscript{285}

An apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people exalts the principle of love for one another and follows the pattern of Christ in the community. In this way, the community of faith “incarnates” intimacy, and the postmodern desire for intimacy finds fulfillment in the commendable community, which shows love and practical concern for δὲν τις χρείαν εἴχεν.

Kevin Graham Ford calls for a commendable community in the evangelization of postmodern people. He suggests that the “intellectual dimension” of the gospel is vital for discipleship (τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων), but not evangelism.\textsuperscript{286}

\textsuperscript{284}Ibid., 187.


Although this writer does not concur completely with Ford’s conclusions about apologetics in the evangelization of postmodern people, his emphasis on community is insightful. The commendable community in which the church is a “safe and nurturing haven of relational stability” presents the most effective tool for the evangelization of postmodern people.²⁸⁷

Obstacles to Community: Deception and Division

When deceit and division mark the community of faith, these obstacles encumber the “truthful telling” of the gospel.²⁸⁸ The apostolic ethic, which exegetes the love of God through Christ to others, becomes the target of Satan’s attack against the faith-community.²⁸⁹ The deception of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)²⁹⁰ and the division between the Hellenists and the Hebrews (Acts 6:1-6) demonstrate an approach to overcome these obstacles.²⁹¹


²⁸⁸Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 52.

²⁸⁹C. E. Autrey, Evangelism in the Acts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 43.


Accordingly, this writer will seek to demonstrate how the apostolic church responded to these threats.\textsuperscript{292}

The setting of the deception and judgment of Ananias and Sapphira informs the approach involved in the resolution of the problem in the community. Capper provides an extensive analysis of the community of goods in its Palestinian context. He concludes that the violation of the couple finds a parallel in the Essene community.\textsuperscript{293} In drawing this comparison, Capper connects membership in the community with the transfer of personal property.\textsuperscript{294} Bruce, however, rightly indicates that such a conclusion outweighs the evidence.\textsuperscript{295} Furthermore, the demand of the surrender of personal property to join the community finds no parallel in the NT. Indeed, Peter’s questions in verse 4 demonstrate the voluntary nature of the community of goods.\textsuperscript{296}

\textsuperscript{292}Trites, “Church Growth in the Book of Acts,” 172.

\textsuperscript{293}Brian Capper, “The Interpretation of Acts 5.4,” \textit{Journal for the Study of the New Testament} 19 (1983): 117-31. Capper shows that the candidates for membership in the Essene community went through a probation period in which all personal property was given, but ownership was not transferred. To deceive the community demonstrated a lack of trust in the community.


\textsuperscript{295}F. F. Bruce, \textit{Acts of the Apostles}, 105 n. 15.

Nevertheless, Ananias and Sapphira sought to deceive, which interrupts the “victorious progress of the people of God.” The work of ὁ σατανᾶς against the apostolic community is the manifestation of his opposition to God and the work of Christ. The methodology of ὁ σατανᾶς is the temptation to sin. In an attempt to garner a reputation for generosity, Ananias and Sapphira seek ψεύσασθαι (Acts 5:3). Yet, the object of this deception is τὸ πνεῦμα and τῷ θεῷ, not merely ἀνθρώποις. The judgment is swift and final (Acts 5:5, 10).

As the community of the Spirit, the church must maintain purity in order to maintain effective witness. The Spirit is the agent of confirmation, power, leadership, and judgment “by which God launches the good news.” The “execution of Ananias is a prolepsis that the proclaimed word carries the prospect of divine retribution for any who deny its truth.” Thankfully, the finality and extent of this judgment does not represent the normative standard.

298 M. Erickson, Christian Theology, 472.
The narrative, however, demonstrates the powerful presence of God in the midst of His people and “zealous to defend” the holiness of the community, which is normative.\(^{301}\) This judgment serves as a blessing for the apostolic community through the Spirit’s monitor of holiness.\(^{302}\) This narrative highlights the judgment upon those who defile the “temple” with impurity (1 Cor 3:16-17).\(^{303}\) Furthermore, the ethic of community means ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψεῦδος and λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἐκαστὸς μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ because ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη (Eph 4:25).\(^{304}\)

An apostolic approach depends upon the Spirit “for its spiritual sustenance and sense of direction,” including judgment upon sin.\(^{305}\) Furthermore, an apostolic approach requires accountability within the community of faith.\(^{306}\)


\(^{303}\)F. F. Bruce, Acts of the Apostles, 104.

\(^{304}\)“Putting away deceit” and “speak truth each one with his neighbor” because “we are members of one another.”


\(^{306}\)M. Erickson, Christian Theology, 1057-58. This includes the necessity of discipline (1 Cor 5:11-13).
Diversity is a norm within the apostolic community. The biblical images of the community reveal this diversity of membership. The diversity, however, is “socialized” by the unity of the Spirit and the ethics of an apostolic community, specifically in connection with ἀλλήλων. John Milbank writes that “peace no longer depends upon the reduction to the self-identical, but is the sociality of harmonic difference.”\(^{307}\) An apostolic approach, following the example of Acts 6:1-6, provides this “harmonic peace.”

Along with the growth of the apostolic community, ἐγένετο γογγυσμὸς τῶν Ἑλληνιστῶν πρὸς τοὺς Ἑβραίους (Acts 6:1).\(^{308}\) This conflict demonstrates the social, cultural, and linguistic differences within the growing faith-community.\(^{309}\)


This diversity, although present, should not be overemphasized since Greek culture had already influenced much of the Palestinian world.\(^\text{310}\)

Although the subject-matter for the γογγυσμός focuses on the distribution of food to the needy, this probably represents one of many factors contributing to the conflict.\(^\text{311}\) This writer, however, does not concur with the reconstruction of many commentators on this passage. Haenchen, for example, seeks to demonstrate the emergence of two distinct congregations within the apostolic community. He builds his case from the conclusion that only Hellenists experience persecution (Acts 8:1; 9:31; 11:19; 12:1). Haenchen’s suggestion is that these two groups are so distinct that the Jewish leaders persecuted one and not the other. Luke, therefore, creates the conflict within the apostolic community between the Hellenists and Hebrews to make room for this persecution.\(^\text{312}\)


Conzelmann, as well, suggests the creation of a two-level structure within the apostolic community: the community around ὁ ὅθεκα and the Hellenist community around ἐπτᾶ. Capper also indicates that the apostolic community solves the conflict between these two distinct groups with a further division. The apostolic community nominates and elects ἐπτᾶ to lead the “separately developing community of hellenistic believers” rather than to unify the Hellenists and Hebrews.

The apostolic ethic of community, however, requires a more synchronic analysis of this text. Unlike the reconstructive efforts represented here, this writer seeks to discern the natural appeal of the text. As Bruce notes, the ἐπτᾶ certainly are leaders among the Hellenists in the apostolic community, but their selection by the community does not necessarily point to the further fracture of the community. In fact, Haenchen initially proposes that “this story seems entirely plausible.” He then builds a case to “unravel the tangle” which he perceives beyond the text.

313“The Twelve” and “seven.” Conzelman, Acts of the Apostles, 44.


The plausibility of this narrative rests upon a view of Luke’s historical reliability. Hengel summarizes the viewpoint of this writer when he suggests that the historical details within Luke’s writing “do not fit in with the popular picture of Luke as a kind of pious, ahistorical novelist.” Accordingly, as Luke reports it, “there is no reason to picture a breach or separation in the total Christian community -- only the sort of ‘distancing’ created by natural linguistic and cultural differences.”

The problem for the apostolic community focuses upon the “distance” between two groups within the community. The Twelve offer “total participation” within the community; namely, ἐπισκέψασθε . . . ἀνδρέας ἐξ υμών μαρτυρομένους ἐπτά (Acts 6:3). With the approval ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους, the community elects seven Hellenists to bridge the distance between those who were voicing their concern and the whole of the community within the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5).


318 Polhill, Acts, 179.

319 “Examine from among you seven men who are favorably confirmed.”

320 “Before the whole assembly.” I. H. Marshall, Acts of the Apostles, 127. The Greek names of the seven men leads to the assumption that they were Hellenists.
Even if the choice of seven Hellenists is a movement to placate the Hellenists, the primary requirement for these men is μαρτυρομένους, πλήρεις πνεύματος καὶ σοφίας. Bruce indicates that these are “ideal requirements” for appointments in church leadership. As such, these men provide the leadership necessary to maintain the unity of the Spirit within the community of faith through the leadership of the Spirit who guides them into all wisdom.

Postmodern people seek to distance themselves from the “distance of others.” They despise the relegation of “others” to the place of inferiority. Postmodernism rejects outright this “totalization.” As Lyotard pronounces, “Let us wage a war on totality.” Albert Borgman suggests that the postmodern person desires to hear and to respond to the “voice of alterity,” which is the cry of the “other.” The apostolic community responds to the voice of alterity.

322 The present, passive participle, μαρτυρομένους, refers to a favorable report concerning these men. Furthermore they should be “full of the Spirit and wisdom.”
An apostolic approach deals with divisions in the church according to the pattern of Acts 6:1-6. The “voice of alterity” gains a hearing, and the leadership respond with decisive action to respond to the specific needs.\(^{326}\)

The result of this immediate response is that \(\delta\ \lambda\gamma\omega\ \tauου\ \thetaεου\ \eta\mu\zeta\alpha\epsilon\nu\ kai\ \epsilon\pi\lambda\thetaυ\upsilon\nu\epsilon\tau\omega\) (Acts 6:7).\(^{327}\) “The Christian community had evidently been guided in the disposition of its own affairs so that its witness to ‘those outside’ remained vibrant and attractive.”\(^{328}\) The same is true for the contemporary church in a postmodern world.

This lengthy analysis of the role of community in the evangelization of postmodern people focuses on the biblical conception of the community of faith: unity and mission; inclusion \(\deltai\ \tauης\ \pi\upsigma\epsilon\tauω\ς\ \epsilon\nu\ \chi\ri\upsigma\tau\phi\ \iota\eta\sigma\omega\upsilon\); and uniqueness and purity. As a “divine standard” of God to the world, an apostolic community serves as an avenue for the transformation from a postmodern to a Christian worldview through \(\tauη\ \deltaι\deltaax\chi\tau\tauω\nu\ \alpha\pi\ost\tau\upsilon\lambda\nu\) and \(\kou\nu\nu\iota\alpha\).\) The community also functions as a living witness to the love of God following the pattern of Jesus Christ through the apostolic ethic.


\(^{327}\) “The word of God grew and increased.”

This ethic uniquely answers the postmodern desire for intimacy. As such, the apostolic ethic of community provides a powerful tool for the evangelization of postmodern people. Finally, the obstacles to an apostolic community, which includes deception and division, find resolution through the leadership of the Spirit in a postmodern world.

The role of the community in the evangelization of postmodern people does not present the absolutism of the community, which is the postmodern plea. Instead, the role of community exalts the absolutism of Christ. As Moltmann cogently states: "The visible church is, as Christ’s church, the ministry of reconciliation exercised upon the world. Thus the church is to be seen, not as absolute, but in its relationship to the divine reconciler."³²⁹

³²⁹ Moltmann, Church in the Power of the Spirit, 153-54.
CHAPTER FOUR
POSTMODERN PLURALITIES, PLURALISM, AND AN APOSTOLIC APPROACH

Evangelization in the Midst of Pluralities

The postmodern ethos seeks pluralism in the face of pluralities. This dissertation distinguishes between plurality and pluralism. David Tracy suggests that “plurality is a fact. Pluralism is one of the many evaluations of that fact.”¹ Plurality is “the sheer diversity of race, value systems, heritage, language, culture, and religion in many Western and some other nations.”² Pluralism, however, is the response to plurality which approves, cherishes, and embraces the multiple, and sometimes contradictory, differences.³ As such, pluralism


²D. A. Carson, Gagging of God, 13. Carson gives plurality the nomenclature of “empirical pluralism.”

declares that all truth-claims, and religions, are equal. Therefore, “Jesus Christ must then be regarded as a religious genius like Buddha or Mohammed -- human beings at the origin of a world religion, praiseworthy but nothing more.” Pluralism seeks the “deferral of all strong claims to unity or even truth” so that “there is no officially approved pattern of belief or conduct.”

This writer proposes that evangelism in the midst of postmodern pluralities follows the pattern of evangelism in apostolic times. Paul Lakeland, however, suggests that the postmodern identification of the “community of redemption” as a “place of relative, revisable, pragmatic, provisional ‘ways of seeing what-is’” demands an approach different from the first-century church. Lakeland’s approach does not seek persuasion toward the gospel, but a


5D. Tracy, “Christianity in the Wider Context,” 2.


conversation with pluralities which leads to a consensus.\textsuperscript{8} Lakeland further indicates that the Christian community “cannot realistically understand itself as the only avenue of the divine into human history.”\textsuperscript{9} Lakeland, therefore, rejects the necessity of Christ for salvation.\textsuperscript{10} For Lakeland, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra defines salvation as “being faithful to the earth.”\textsuperscript{11} Thus, he concludes that other religious traditions are equally valuable for the salvation of the postmodern world.\textsuperscript{12}

Such an approach for evangelization, however, deconstructs the gospel so that it is no longer biblical, apostolic, or Christian. Although Lakeland’s approach calls for postmodern people to “choose one” among the alternative versions of reality, no one version is better than another.\textsuperscript{13} The evangelization of the apostolic church in

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 102.

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 104-105.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 109-111.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 111.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 112-13. Lakeland writes: “What is distinctive about Christianity remains within Christianity and in no way challenges or represents itself as superior to other religious traditions, namely, the belief that in Christ God has spoken in a way that human beings can receive the word.”

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 113.
pluralities presents a better approach for the contemporary church.

Pluralities in Apostolic and Postmodern Times

The nature of plurality in pre-modern and postmodern times presents similarities as well as differences, but the fact of plurality in apostolic age is certain. An examination of New Testament (NT) literature provides a mosaic of the religious and cultural pluralities in the pre-modern world of the apostolic church.14 Robert Grant’s summary of the gods in the book of Acts certainly points to this fact.15 Anthony Blasi of Tennessee State University describes the sociology of early Christianity within the framework of the Roman Empire. He suggests that the context of the apostolic church’s evangelization was a “culturally pluralist environment.”16

Several examples from Acts and the Pauline epistles

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provide ample evidence of the plurality which confronted the apostolic church in the evangelization of the ancient world. The apostle Paul writes: οὐ γὰρ ἐστιν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίον τε καὶ Ἑλληνος, ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς κύριος πάντων, πλουτῶν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἑπικαλομένους αὐτῶν (Rom 10:12). 17 Ἰουδαίον and Ἑλληνος represent plurality, as does δοῦλος, ἐλεύثερος, ἀρσεν, and θηλυ in Gal 3:28. In Col 3:11 Paul adds περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος and Σκύθης to the list of pluralities. 18 Rajak indicates that these listings represent ethnic, linguistic, religious, or social differences. 19

More specifically, however, the apostolic church faces the challenges of religious plurality. Paul’s evangelism in Athens illustrates this plurality (Acts 17). Athens possessed “a blend of superstitious idolatry and enlightened philosophy” in its cultural and religious

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17“For there is no difference of both Jew and Greek, for the same Lord [is] rich toward all who are calling upon Him.”

18These terms are translated: δοῦλος (slave), ἐλεύθερος (free), ἀρσεν (male), and θηλυ (female) in Galatians 3:28; περιτομή (circumcision), ἀκροβυστία (uncircumcision), βάρβαρος (barbarian), and Σκύθης (Scythian) in Colossians 3:11.

The city is an example of the religious and philosophical plurality that pervaded the ancient world. Barrett, drawing from κατείδωλον (Acts 17:16), states that Athens “was overrun with idols.” Furthermore, Bertil Gärtner’s complex analysis of the Areopagus speech seeks to demonstrate Paul’s use of Stoic and Jewish concepts as an apostolic approach to evangelize those gathered at Athens. Conzelmann indicates that Paul’s speech brings “the representatives of the universal Greek culture into play” and engages the audience as “typical Athenians.” This apostolic approach will be discussed below.

As Marshall suggests, “[t]he world of the New Testament was a world in which different cultures or ways of life were in contact with one another, leading to

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assimilation between them as well as to sharp collision.”

In the same manner, the contemporary church faces this collision of pluralities. The pluralities in postmodern times is comparable to the “encounter of the early church with the religious variety of the Greco-Roman world, including Greek philosophy.”

Alasdair MacIntyre argues that the “contemporary vision of the world” is a “multiplicity of visions deriving from that irreducible plurality of values.” When considering the “global village” that has emerged during the postmodern era, one can recognize the veracity of MacIntyre’s statement. Charles Jencks proposes that the “meteoric” rise of the information age has increased the accessibility to various cultural beliefs. Following Jencks, Grenz declares that the information age has “brought

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the world together in a manner never before possible,” so that “the global village imbues its citizens with a vivid awareness of the cultural diversity of our planet.”

The postmodern religious pursuits reflect the heterogeneity and plurality of the generation. Richard Rorty indicates that today’s postmodern ethos is filled with “lots of picture galleries, book displays, movies, concerts, ethnographic museums, museums of science and technology” which represent the plurality of cultural options available for worship. With the demise of the Enlightenment ideal, “empiricism was rejected as the only way of knowing and replaced with myriad options. There became multiple paths to knowledge and understanding, none more important or real than another. As a result, spiritual ideas were acceptable, but no system of belief was allowed to be more ‘true’ than another.”

As with Athens of the first-century, today’s

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30Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen, Reckless Hope: Understanding and Reaching Baby Busters (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 38.
postmodern scene is filled with idols. One difference between the pre-modern and postmodern, however, is the vast landscape of the latter in terms of information access and dissemination. The philosophers of Athens were primarily the elite thinkers with specialized training and knowledge. The plurality of Athens, while specialized, represented the plurality of the Greco-Roman culture. The age of the postmodern is the age of the computer and the "information super-highway." The postmodern philosopher consists of anyone who has the temerity to "run a search" on the "net" and consider the information gleaned as both legitimate and valuable. The plurality of the postmodern is neither specialized nor representative. The "truth statements" or religious beliefs of the person in the "chat room" are as legitimate and valuable as the "truth statements" or religious beliefs of leading academic theorists in the field of philosophy.

31 Rorty, Essays on Heidegger and Others, 132-33.


opportunity and challenge for the evangelization of postmodern people. This subject will be discussed in the later section dealing with Paul’s speech in Athens, for Paul’s address provides a paradigm for the faithful and effective evangelization of pre-modern or postmodern pluralities.

Michael Green presents the challenge of an apostolic approach in the face of pluralities: “We sometimes think that relativism and pluralism are peculiar to our time. We feel it politically correct to adopt them. Not so the early Christians. They lived in a world more relativist and far more pluralist than our own. And yet they would not make any compromise on this issue. What was needed was not more religion, but a new life -- and Jesus could provide it.”35 The apostolic church provides insight for the project of evangelization.

Judaic, Hellenistic, or Christian? A Question of Pluralities

As has already been noted in chapter 3, the apostolic church struggled with pluralities from within as well as without.36 The issue in this section, however,


focuses upon the Christian identity for the apostolic community when facing the plurality of Judaic and Hellenistic cultures. The increasing differences between the Hebrews and Hellenists find resolution in Acts 6, but the diversity among Judaic and Hellenistic influences continues for the apostolic community.

For example, Cornelius’ conversion marks a distinctive collision of pluralities for the apostolic community in the evangelization of the world. Bolt suggests that the three-fold repetition of the event marks the significance of the content. 37 Through the drama of a vision (Acts 10:9-16), Peter recognizes that the culturally specific dietary laws “no longer applied for Gentile or Jew in Christ.” 38 As Bruce suggests, the gospel’s reach “has been steadily broadened,” but this story illustrates that the time had come for the barrier between Jews and Gentiles “to be crossed authoritatively by an apostle.” 39


God’s threefold command to eat the unclean animals of the heavenly vision (10:9-16) leads to stunning conclusions: Peter deduces that no person is unclean (v. 28), that God accepts people of every nation who fear [H]im and do right (vv. 34-35), and that therefore the gospel should be preached to Cornelius (vv. 36-43). God dramatically confirms Peter’s deductions by sending [H]is Spirit on the centurion and his companions before he finishes preaching (v. 44).  

The collision of plurality exists between the Jewish cultural expressions of the Mosaic law, the Hellenistic cultural expressions in conflict with the Mosaic law, and the Christian response of the apostolic community. This statement does not contradict the case of Cornelius as εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ (Acts 10:2). Although Cornelius sympathizes with the Jewish cultural expressions and worship, other Gentile converts do not. Jervell incorrectly suggests that the qualifications of εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ represent the paradigm for all Gentile converts. Sheeley mistakenly views φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ as a qualification


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for the reception of salvation.\textsuperscript{43} Luke’s use of φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ, however, emphasizes his Gentile identity, in order to highlight the gospel’s proclamation to the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{44} This writer contends that Luke purposes to explicate the distinction between the Jew and Gentile. The narrative does not indicate that εὐσεβής καὶ φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ are qualities that one must have prior to salvation. The emphasis of Luke’s narrative in chapter 10 points to the movement of the gospel outside the realm of Jewish traditions.

The Antiochene mission also represents a continuation of the broadening scope of the apostolic approach to the Gentiles. Luke records the beginnings of this work as ἀνδρεῖς Κύπριοι καὶ Κυρηναῖοι, οἵτινες ἔλθοντες εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν ἔλαλον καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλληνιστὰς εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν (Acts 11:20).\textsuperscript{45} The persecution of Stephen\textsuperscript{46} leads to the dispersion of the apostolic community beyond Jerusalem, so that οἱ μὲν οὐν διασπαρεῖντες διῆλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον


\textsuperscript{45}“Men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who coming into Antioch shared also with the Hellenists, preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus.”

\textsuperscript{46}See chapter 5, “Obstacles for Personal Evangelism.”
Therefore those who were scattered went throughout proclaiming the good news of the word.


Taylor, *Commentaire Historique (Act. 9,1-18,22)*, 65. The mission of the men of Cyprus and Cyrene is “independent of the church of Jerusalem.” Furthermore, he suggests that “there is no reason to place them in relation
Bauckham rejects this proposal and suggests that Jerusalem remains the center of the evangelistic enterprise.\textsuperscript{52} Accordingly, the presence of Barnabas in Antioch as the formal representative of the Jerusalem church augments Bauckman’s analysis (Acts 11:22).

Luke describes the proclamation as \textit{εὐαγγελίζομενοι τῶν κύριοι Ἰησοῦ} (Acts 11:20). Bruce notes that the use of κύριοι is significant.\textsuperscript{53} The evangelists provide a specific answer to the need of the Gentiles. Ramsay MacMullen indicates that the religious pursuits of the Gentiles possessed a lacuna of assurance for \textit{renatus in aeternum}.\textsuperscript{54} Bruce notes that “many were trying to find in various mystery cults a divine lord who could guarantee salvation and immortality to his devotees; now the pagans of Antioch were assured that what they vainly sought in those quarters could be secured through the Son of God who had lately become man, suffered

with the ‘Seven’ of Jerusalem or their adherents.”


\textsuperscript{53}F. F. Bruce, \textit{Book of Acts}, 225.

\textsuperscript{54}Ramsay MacMullen, \textit{Paganism in the Roman Empire} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 53. The Latin phrase may be interpreted as “rebirth in eternity.”
death, and conquered the grave in Palestine.”

Witherington makes a similar argument for the use of σωτήρ in the apostolic evangelization of the Gentiles. As the evangelization occurs among the Gentile pluralities, the apostolic community utilizes σωτήρ, connected with the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ conquered the grave, so too will His followers experience the blessings of eternal life.

In consideration of pluralities, therefore, the Antioch mission institutes a new chapter in the evangelization of the ancient world. The leadership in Jerusalem sends Barnabas, πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ πίστεως (Acts 11:24), who verifies the ministry and encourages further evangelism. This marks the growth of the evangelistic efforts and the intensification of pluralities within the apostolic community. Interestingly, the statement in Acts 11:26, χρηματίσαι τε πρώτως ἐν ἀντισχείᾳ τοῦ μαθητῶν Χριστιανοῦς, suggests the view of the apostolic


57Ibid., 161.
community as Christian rather than Judaic or Hellenistic. Furthermore, Paul’s speech to the Jewish community in Acts 13:46 demonstrates the necessity of evangelization among Gentiles unaffiliated with the Jewish synagogue. The “inauguration of the Gentile mission” is a necessary event in God’s plan. Paul views the church as the “Israel of promise” which God offers to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. The conversion of the Jews and the Gentiles provides the fulfillment of the promise to become the people of God in Christ Jesus. In this way the necessity of proclamation of the gospel to the Jews and to the Gentiles creates a new identification as ὁσιοὶ ἔστιν ἐπαγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Acts 13:48). This is not an identity of a new religion but as the “true Israel.”


62 “As many as were appointed for eternal life.”

63 Conzelmann, Gentiles, Jews, Christians, 251-52.
The issue of identity finds final form in Acts at the Jerusalem Council.\(^{64}\) Sanders proposes that a conflict arises between Paul and Barnabas and those who were preaching that circumcision accompanies salvation.\(^{65}\) Here, the collision of pluralities initiates a resolution. Hellenistic Christians consider the law as superfluous, subsumed under “saving act in Christ.”\(^{66}\) Luke reports, however, that some believers, τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἱρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων, consider that δεῖ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς παραγγέλλειν τε τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον Μωυσέως (Acts 15:5).\(^{67}\)

Peter argues (Acts 15:7-11) that Cornelius’ conversion is indicative that τὸν νόμον Μωυσέως is not salvific. He declares that οὐθὲν διέκρινεν μεταξὺ ἡμῶν τὲ καὶ αὐτῶν τὴ πίστει καθαρίσας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν (Acts 15:9).\(^{68}\) The proof of salvation apart from τὸν νόμον Μωυσέως is that God accepted


\(^{66}\) Conzelmann, Gentiles, Jews, Christians, 252.

\(^{67}\) Believers “from the party of the Pharisees” consider that “it is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

\(^{68}\) “He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.”
them by δοῦς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον (15:8). The avenue into community is through faith in Christ Jesus. As Bruce indicates, Peter warns that the believers of the Pharisee party stand in opposition to God’s plan and invite His judgment.

Bauckham, however, explains that “this line of argument cannot, for an assembly of Jewish Christians, be the finally decisive one: the issue is a matter of halakhah, which can only be decided from Scripture.” The speech of James provides the biblical argument and the decisive proof that τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως is not part of salvation. Following the pesher model for interpretation, James utilizes Amos 9:11-12 with allusions to other OT texts.

In the first place, the conflated quotation in Acts 15:16-18 establishes that Gentiles who join the eschatological people of God are not obliged to be

69“Giving the Holy Spirit.”

70See chapter 3, “Images of an Apostolic Community: God’s People.”

71F. F. Bruce, Book of Acts, 336; Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” 452. Paul and Barnabas support Peter’s argument, but play a minor role in the debate.

72Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” 452.


circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. But secondly, an exegetical argument which creates a link between closely related prophecies and Leviticus 17-18 establishes that the Law of Moses itself contains just four commandments which do explicitly apply to precisely those Gentiles.\textsuperscript{75}

The four prohibitions included in the apostolic decree indicate the ceremonial requirements from Leviticus 17-18 upon Gentiles who chose to live in the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{76} As such, the prohibitions present the requirements which had always been applied to Jew and Gentile alike.\textsuperscript{77} Thus, the apostolic community confirms that conformity to τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως, especially in terms of circumcision, is not a requirement for salvation. The Jerusalem council’s conclusion establishes the “universality and progress of the word . . . on the basis of the unity of the people of God.”\textsuperscript{78}

One final note needs attention in the consideration...

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 461.

\textsuperscript{76}Haenchen, Acts of the Apostles, 469. Bruce proposes that the four elements are ethical requirements which would guard the Christian moral standards. This suggestion, however, dismisses the importance of Lev 17 and 18 in the discussion. F. F. Bruce, Book of Acts, 300-301.


of identity in plurality; namely, Paul’s confrontation with Peter (Gal 2:14-21).\(^{79}\) The occasion for this confrontation is οὐκ ὁρθοποδούσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (Gal 2:14).\(^{80}\) Peter’s inconsistency focuses upon the “free table-fellowship” between Jewish and Gentile believers.\(^{81}\) Apparently, the messengers from James came to remind Jewish Christians that they must follow specific requirements concerning table-fellowship with Gentiles.\(^{82}\) Upon the arrival of messengers from James, Peter draws back from the company of Gentiles.\(^{83}\) Neill suggests that Peter’s conduct “would make a divided Church inevitable or a united Church


\(^{80}\)“They did not walk straight concerning the truth of the gospel.”


\(^{83}\)T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (London: Manchester University Press, 1962), 180-81. He suggests that Peter’s table-fellowship with Gentiles was used as an indictment against the Jerusalem church by Jewish leaders, and Peter did not want to jeopardize the missionary work of the Jerusalem church or create a stumbling-block for evangelism among the Jews.
impossible.”84 Paul, therefore, apologetically promotes once again the impossibility of salvation through the τῶν νόμων Μωϋσέως (Gal 2:16).85

An Apostolic Approach to Postmodern Pluralities

Paul’s epistles demonstrate an apostolic approach to postmodern pluralities. An examination of his epistles provides an aid for evangelization in postmodern plurality. Paul’s letters highlight an apostolic approach which recognizes the diversity within culture, yet through which the Spirit transforms the pluralities into a unified community for the purpose of mission.86

Paul presents this approach in his epistle to the church of Ephesus:

ἀρα οὐν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐπουκοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμέλιῳ τῶν ἁποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, δύνασθαι ἀκρογωνιάδαις αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐν ὑπὸ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογημένη αὐξεῖ εἰς ναὸν ἁγίου ἐν κυρίῳ, ἐν ὑπὸ καὶ


Consequently therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners but you are fellow-citizens of the saints and members of the household of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom all the building which is fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:19-22).

Interestingly, George S. Duncan, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), 178, paraphrases Paul’s admonition, εἰζωμεν πνευματι, πνευματι και στοιχωμεν (Gal 5:25), to bring out the corporate identity of Spirit-life implied by στοιχωμεν. See also, R. Y. K. Fung, Galatians, 275-76.
of the *diaspora* community in Ephesus, the Gentiles understood the term to mean “God-fearers.”

As such, when Paul uses the term here, he is speaking of the existing differentiation between the Jew and the Gentile in synagogue worship. To say that Gentile Christians are no longer ξένοι is to say that they “are not just guests of God, but members of His household.”

Paul also describes the believers as οὐκ πάροικοι, which is “one who lives in a place that is not his home.”

This idea of an alien or foreigner in Judaism is different from the “God-fearer” of synagogue worship. The πάροικος is a “resident alien” who lives in Israel without becoming a Jew.

Foulkes suggests that these two terms point to “people who might live alongside them [the people of God] in the same country, but owning no land and with only the most superficial rights of citizenship.”

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90Ibid., 5:29.


The contention in this passage is that the Spirit merges the cultural distinctive of Jews and Gentiles into the “temple of the Spirit,” so that all members are συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων. Much debate surrounds ἁγίων. Bruce indicates that ἁγίων is “the people of God of all ages.”

Procksch draws upon the analogy of Rom 11:17, which describes the Gentile believers being grafted into the “holy stump of the OT people of God” as new branches. He then identifies this “holy stump” as πολιτεία τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (Eph 2:12), “except that we are now dealing with an Ἰσραήλ κατὰ πνεῦμα.” Procksch, therefore, concludes that the ἁγίων are Jewish Christians.

Andrew Lincoln, however, proposes that Procksch’s
comparison of verse 12 with verse 19 fails to comprehend the “new status” which “transcends the old categories.” Looking to verses 15 and 16 as the prominent guide for understanding verse 19, Lincoln indicates that, just as Christ creates one new man from the two, ἄγιως refers to a community which is neither Jew nor Gentile, but a new race of all believers.  

Paul extends the metaphor so that the community is also a family, in which all members are οίκειοι τοῦ θεοῦ. Specifically, according to Lincoln, the Gentiles, who were once far off (Eph 2:13), now are in the “bosom” of God’s family. In this way, “each member of the household is functioning optimally in behalf of the whole, not self-assertively in behalf of individual interest.”

Beginning with verse 20, the apostle Paul introduces the imagery of the building and temple for the apostolic community. He describes the foundation of the


98 F. Foulkes, Ephesians, 93, writes: “Citizenship of the people of God was one expressive way of telling the truth concerning the position in God’s kingdom that Jews and Gentiles now equally share.”


100 Thomas C. Oden, Life in the Spirit, 295.
oικεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul explicitly refers to those who proclaim the revelation of God through Christ.  

Both the prophets and the apostles lay the foundation upon which the “walls of the Church bear witness to the community.” The apostles and prophets “constitute the foundation ministries in the church” and perhaps “the first stones to be laid in the new building.”

Markus Barth suggests that ἐπὶ τὸ θεμελίῳ may refer to gifted individuals “witnessing explicitly to Jesus Christ.” Schmithals indicates that the phrase represents the “deposit of doctrine.” The foundation of the “temple of the Spirit,” however, does not represent the individuals themselves. In 1 Cor 3:11, Paul declares that the only foundation upon which the “temple of the Spirit” may sufficiently be built is Jesus Christ. It seems, therefore,

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1 K. Rengstorff, s.v. “ἀπόστολος,” TDNT, 1:441, indicates that τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν refer to the NT and OT witnesses for God. D. Hill, New Testament Prophecy (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1979), 139, suggests that the use of the single definite article presents apostles and prophets as the same group of people.


3 F. F. Bruce, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, 304.

4 Markus Barth, Ephesians 1-3, 315-16.

that the \( \text{θεμέλιος τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν} \) refers specifically to the proclamation of those who received God’s gospel through Christ to those who, in turn, received Christ Jesus. Indeed, this interpretation meets Paul’s statement, \( \text{Πάντες γὰρ νῦν θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ} \) (Gal 3:26).\(^{106}\)

Here, Paul declares that \( \text{ὁντος ἀκρογωνιάιον αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ}. \) Debate swirls around the location and meaning of \( \text{ἀκρογωνιάιον}, \) whether it is part of the foundation or at the top of the building. G. W. H. Lampe indicates that \( \text{ἀκρογωνιάιον} \) is the “top-most angle or point of a pyramid.”\(^{107}\) Hanson concludes that Jesus “is the top stone of the pinnacle of the building.”\(^{108}\) R. J. McKelvey, on the other hand, rejects this proposal and contends that \( \text{ἀκρογωνιάιον} \) refers to the foundation stone of the building.\(^{109}\) Jeremias, however, moves beyond the location of the stone to denote the significance of the image when he writes that verse 20 describes the church as the spiritual temple, the apostles

\(^{106}\)“For all are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”


and prophets as the foundation, and Jesus Christ as the “final stone” who completes the temple. Foulkes also suggests that this phrase “denotes primarily the honour [sic] of [H]is position in the building, but then also the way in which each stone is fitted into [H]im, and finds its true place and usefulness only in relation to [H]im.” Thus, Bruce indicates that “keystone” is the “better rendering of ἀκρογωνιάος.”

Paul expands ἀκρογωνιάος (2:21-22) when he describes the relationship between Christ, believers, and the church. Through the use of ἐν ὑ, Paul reveals once again the centrality of Jesus Christ in the redemptive plan of God. Through Jesus Christ, the wall of separation between God and humanity falls down (Eph 2:1-13). Furthermore, in Christ the wall of separation which divides individuals from one another falls down (Eph 2:14-18), so that δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. This is Christ’s project of reconciliation.

In verse 16 Paul writes, καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς

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111 F. Foulkes, Ephesians, 95.
112 F. F. Bruce, Epistles to Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, 306 n. 154.
113 “Through Him both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:18).
And that He might reconcile both completely to God in one body through the cross, killing the enmity by it” (Eph 2:16).

The terminology of reconciliation is the language of human relationships. The result of His death on the cross is the death of the την ἐχθραν caused by sin. In the same manner, the enmity between Jew and Gentile has also been killed through the cross of Christ. Because Jesus has offered peace both to Jew and Gentile, they share the same access to the Father through Jesus Christ.

Having abolished the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, Jesus Christ joins the whole building together. The use of πᾶσα οἰκοδομή without the article calls for the interpretation, “every building.”

114“The better manuscript evidence, such as the uncial Sinaiticus (א), Vaticanus (B), Bezae (D), Boernerianus (G), Athos (Ψ), miniscules, Byzantine Lectionary, and church fathers (Clement, Origen, Basil, Pseudo-Justin, Chrysostom, and Theodoret) calls for the current reading. Other manuscripts, such as the uncial Sinaiticus (א), Alexandrius (A), Ephraemi (C), miniscules, and church fathers (Origen, Chrysostom, Euthalius, and Theophylact) provide the article, so that the text reads, πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομή. Understanding that the shorter and more difficult reading is many times more favorable, the former reading carries the most weight as original.
local church. Moule suggests that the phrase points to a
Hebraism depicting the entire, rather than localized, community of believers. Fee opts for the idea that the anarthrous construction describes “all that has gone into the building” while Christ joins the building together.

The participle, συναρμολογομένη, depicts the union of membership into a unified whole. Christ, as the άκρογωνιαίος, is the bond to join each individual together. As Christ joins the community together, He also provides for its growth, which is the continual growth of the individuals into a unified whole (Eph 4:16).

Schnackenburg concludes that the Spirit is the key to this text. Through a succession of images, the apostle moves his readers through a series of metaphors until they come to the final image of the community of believers, which is the “temple of the Spirit.” These images move from

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118 C. F. D. Moule, Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, 94-95

119 Gordon Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 686 n. 92.

120 C. Maurer, s.v. “συναρμολογέω,” TDNT, 7:855-56.

121 Rudolf Schnackenburg, Der Brief an die Epheser, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 10 (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 125.
remote relationships to intimate relationships. Those who were far off are now brought near. Those who were strangers and foreigners are now fellow citizens and fellow members of God’s household. God’s household is a community of believers, who, through the metaphor of a building, exist as the “present place of God’s habitation.”

Although Lincoln posits that this passage refers to the universal church, Fee suggests that the imagery describes more than “a nebulous entity.” The apostolic community involves personal commitments in relationship. Unity is not a nebulous concoction of contemporary ecumenicism for the universal church. Rather, unity comes through the intimate bond which the Spirit establishes between individuals within the community. As the same Spirit dwells within each individual, Paul calls those individuals to express the unity of the Spirit in a personal and intimate manner. This intimate expression comes through a “gathered community ‘filled with the Spirit’ and thus ‘teaching and admonishing one another’ in the various kinds

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124 Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 689 n. 105. Fee contends that Paul’s ecclesiology “finds expression at the local level, even in this circular letter.”
of songs, including those of the Spirit.”

Hanson correctly adduces that the building terminology in Paul’s epistles “is not an individualistic concept, but one of fellowship.” Barth oversteps the evidence, however, when he proposes that this image “excludes the notion that God’s presence might be primarily located in the souls of individual believers.” The related passage in 1 Cor 6:19 certainly speaks to the individual believers as the ναός τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγιοῦ πνεύματος. Rom 8:9-12 also reveals that the Spirit resides in individual believers, for Paul writes, ἐὰν δὲ τὸν πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ. Barth’s language suggests a theological contention that one may not possess the Spirit

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125 Gordon Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 689.
126 Hanson, Unity of the Church, 130.
127 Markus Barth, Ephesians 1-3, 321. Barth further writes: “No one, not even the church and her most pious members, can possess God for [H]imself alone.”
128 Gordon Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 263. Fee interprets this phrase to mean that the body of the individual is the “present habitation of God’s Spirit.”
129 “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this one is not of Him” (Rom 8:9b). Peter Stuhlmacher, Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary, trans. Scott J. Hafemann (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1994), 118. He suggests that Paul’s description is similar to the Essene text (1QS 11:9-18), in which the God of righteousness “on the basis of free grace, forgives the sinner his transgressions, fills him with the Holy Spirit, and enables him to praise as well as to walk in perfection.”
apart from the church. Paul, however, indicates that one may not possess the Spirit apart from Christ, who is the ἀκρογωνιαῖος. As the ἀκρογωνιαῖος, Jesus Christ fits together the individual members of the building of God so that the community grows εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ. The function of this “holy temple” is “to be a dwelling for God.” Stott suggests that εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι is an image of God’s “new society, His redeemed people scattered throughout the inhabited world. They are His home on earth.”

In this way, the apostolic church envisions the unity amidst diversity. The apostolic community, facing the multiplicity of plurality, finds unity through the power of the Spirit, uniting their hearts and lives with the common mission of evangelism.

**Evangelization in the Midst of Pluralism**

Pluralism also presents a problem for the

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130Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, 323, suggests that although individual growth is concomitant to the growth of the community, Paul decisively has in mind here the growth of the entire community.


133See discussion in chapter 1, “Prevailing Postmodern Themes: Pluralism”
evangelization of the postmodern person. Alister McGrath suggests that pluralism is a common issue for the contemporary and the New Testament church. The New Testament church was not content with “conversation” or “dialogue” with the pluralities, but they preached the gospel. McGrath concludes that the future of Christianity depends upon evangelism.

The Imperial Ethic of Pluralism

Cherished pluralism is the only acceptable absolute in postmodernism and is the ethic which dominates. Insightfully, Alasdair MacIntyre indicates that the postmodern culture has embraced “psychological effectiveness” as the replacement to truth. He further writes that the pursuit of meaning “cannot be simply or unconditionally identified with any particular moral attitude or point of view . . . just because of the fact

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135 Alister McGrath, Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 159-62.

136 D. A. Carson, Gagging of God, 19.

that its judgments are in the end criterionless.”\textsuperscript{138} The result of “criterionless” judgment is the exaltation of plurality.\textsuperscript{139} The postmodern setting, therefore, gives rise to the “profound human meaning and importance” of the plurality of religious traditions.\textsuperscript{140} As such, Allan Bloom suggests that “relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue. . . . Openness -- and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth . . . is the great insight of our times.”\textsuperscript{141}

Craig proposes that the “postmodernist is not merely saying that we cannot know with certainty which religious worldview is true and we therefore must be open-minded; rather he maintains that none of the religious worldviews is objectively true, and therefore none can be excluded in deference to the allegedly one true religion.”\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., 31.


\textsuperscript{142}W. L. Craig, “Politically Incorrect Salvation,” 77.
In light of this preeminent ethic of pluralism in religious thought, how can the contemporary church evangelize effectively and faithfully the postmodern person?

The Areopagitica, Acts 17:16-34

In light of this imperial ethic of pluralism, Paul’s Areopagitica (Acts 17:16-34) serves as an example for an apostolic approach for evangelism. There is a relationship between δεισιδαιμονεστέρους (Acts 17:22) and the pluralism prevalent in postmodern thinking. Paul’s witness in the midst of the pluralism among the philosophers in Athens sets an example for the evangelism in the postmodern world.

Külling suggests that “dieses Ereignis ist sozusagen die Vorwegnahme der weltgeschichtlich bedeutsamen Tatsache, dass durch diese Botschaft menschliche Weisheit in ihren höchsten Errungenschaften herausgefordert sein wird.” Through the evangelistic message of Paul, the

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145Heinz Külling, “Zur Bedeutung des AGNOSTOS THEOS. Eine Exegese zu Apostelgeschichte 17, 22.23,” Theologische Zeitschrift 36 (1980): 67. The translation is: “This event is, so to speak, the anticipation of the momentous reality
gospel engaged the pluralism of the ancient world.

Following the example of Paul, the Areopagitica speech presents a paradigm for the evangelization of postmodern people. First, Paul begins with a statement of recognition. The δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, according to Conzelmann, means “devout” rather than “superstitious.” Rather than attacking the various idols in place before him, Paul begins with an acknowledgment of religious pursuit among his hearers. Although this is not necessarily complimentary, it clearly is not condemnatory.

The nature of postmodern pluralism certainly presupposes the same δεισιδαιμονεστέρους of postmodern people. Paul’s example for the contemporary church is to recognize and acknowledge the spiritual hunger and search of the postmodern people.

Second, Paul finds a place for common ground in his evangelistic presentation. The altar ἀγνώστω θεῷ offers Paul a starting-point for the gospel. Although they did not

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147 Conzelmann, “Paul’s Address,” 220.

148 Ibid. Conzelmann suggests that Luke takes the common inscription on Athenian altars, “to unknown gods,”
know the identity of this deity, τὸ ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ύμῖν (17:23). The postmodern setting also presents an opportunity for the church to find common ground for evangelization. The popular postmodern culture is filled with spiritual images and symbols which offer a starting-point for the gospel. Hahn and Verhaagen describe this situation through the music and television of postmodern culture. The music of contemporary secular artists provides common ground for the gospel with postmodern people.

Third, the apostle describes the identity of the ἀγνώστος θεός in verses 24 through 29. He seeks to bring his audience “to a proper understanding of the living God.” As Quesnel suggests, Paul “qui s’adresse à des grecs païens, ne cite évidemment pas l’Ecriture juive; il lui préfère les poètes grecs, reconnus comme capables d’ouvrir aux mortels les portes du contact avec le sacré (v. 28).”

and then “changes it into the singular and then uses this as a point of departure for Christian ideas.”

149“This one I proclaim to you.”

150Hahn and Verhaagen, Reckless Hope, 120-21.


152Michel Quesnel, “Paul prédicateur dans les Actes des Apôtres,” New Testament Studies 47 (October 2001): 475. “Paul, who addressed himself to Greek pagans, does not cite evidently Jewish Scripture; he prefers to it the Greek poets, recognized as capable of opening to mortals the gates
In an apostolic approach to postmodern people, the contemporary church must lead the postmodern listeners to a proper understanding of the living God. This demands the use of specific phrases and terms which will not fit neatly with the pluralism of postmodernism. Yet, this approach begins with a common ground and moves toward the specific statements of God’s reality and ultimate sovereignty.

Finally, the apostle presents the necessary response to God through Jesus Christ (17:30-31). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the proof and verification of the power and victory of God. The judgment of the world is also included in this approach. The clarity of the gospel demands a faithful presentation of the judgment that awaits all humanity. The pluralism of postmodern people will cringe at this presentation of an absolute truth-claim. The results, however, depend upon the Spirit of truth leading the hearer toward the conviction that yields repentance (John 16:8-11).

Following the pattern of the apostolic community, the contemporary church may deal effectively with the pluralities and the pluralism of the postmodern world. The final analysis of an apostolic approach for the

of contact with the sacred (v. 28).”

evangelization of postmodern people seeks to remain faithful to the absolute truth of the gospel, and yet also seeks to find avenues through which the Spirit of truth may move more readily to the hearts of the postmodern people.
CHAPTER FIVE
PERSONAL EVANGELISM AND POSTMODERN PEOPLE

An Apostolic Witness in Postmodern Times, Acts 1:8

As a conclusion, this writer seeks to bring specific application for personal evangelism in a postmodern world following an apostolic approach. The first issue to consider is the form and function of μάρτυς with postmodern people (Acts 1:8). According to Strathman, μάρτυς is one who proclaims the facts and the truths of the gospel.¹ Trites indicates that μάρτυς in Acts “presents the claims of Christ against a background of hostility, contention, and persecution,”² which finds similarity to postmodernism.

An apostolic approach, therefore, calls for personal testimony concerning the facts of Christ and the truth of the gospel. As already noted, the Spirit of truth conjoins the witness of the follower of Christ to present epistemological foundations of faith to postmodern people.

¹H. Strathmann, s. v. “μάρτυς κτλ.,” TDNT, 4:492-514.
The mandate of Christ is ἐσεσθε μοι μάρτυρες (Acts 1:8). The believer in a postmodern milieu has the duty to share the gospel with individuals through personal witness. The manner of this evangelistic witness, however, finds various formulations. This writer proposes that the power of personal witness moves along the lines of narrative.

The speeches in Acts present one aspect of this witness. These speeches serve as guidelines for a contemporary approach in personal evangelism. As noted in chapter one, the postmodern people search for a better story to provide meaning for their existence. These speeches in Acts present a variety of style and form. This writer proposes that this variety reflects the different audiences to whom the apostolic church evangelized with the gospel. For instance, when dealing with Jewish sympathizers, the apostolic witnesses interpret Scripture as the basis for Israel’s historical place in God’s plan of redemption.

3“You will be My witnesses.” The future tense carries the force of a command in this context.


Jesus is the culmination and fulfillment of God’s saving purpose. In Acts 5:29-32, “the apostles affirm more briefly that God has exalted the rejected and crucified Jesus, and through [H]im is now offering Israel an opportunity to repent and receive [H]is forgiveness.”

Peter’s evangelistic speech to Cornelius represents the variety of approach to εὐσεβής καὶ φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ. Bruce suggests that the apostolic witness proclaims the fulfillment of prophecy, the facts of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, the eyewitness reports, and the “assurance of forgiveness to all who believe in Jesus.” Paul’s sermon at Antioch Pisidia represents another witness to εὐσεβής καὶ φοβούμενος τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul presents a survey of God’s mighty acts of redemption in Israel’s history (Acts 13:17-25). Jesus, according to Paul’s witness, is the summit of God’s saving deeds (Acts 13:26-37). Salvation, therefore, comes through Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38-39).

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 22.


12 Ibid., 88-89.
Paul’s speeches to a Gentile audience, however, do not include an extensive look at Old Testament Scripture. In Lystra, as well as in the court of the Areopagus, Paul forms his witness around the qeion zw`nta. Rather than a description of God’s activity in the history of Israel, Paul presents the world of nature to point to the “existence, power, and goodness of the Creator.” According to Marshall, this presentation leads Paul to the gospel witness, although Luke does not record this testimony.

Michael Green proposes that the varieties in the evangelism of the apostolic church reflect the needs of the audience. Following an apostolic approach, evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel “in terms that makes sense” to the audience. As Bruce cogently writes, Luke’s record of speeches to Jews demonstrates “how to present the gospel to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles; and when he reproduces the preaching at Lystra and Athens, this, he implies, is how it should be presented to pagans.”

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13Ibid., 67.
15M. Green, Evangelism in the Early Church, 137-38.
Schweizer offers the following elements essential in the apostolic approach to witness: 1) an appeal to Scripture, 2) the “christological kerygma,” 3) proclamation of salvation, and 4) the call to repentance. In an application of the apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people, this writer proposes similar elements. Alvin Reid offers a similar proposal in his evangelistic approach. Reid draws a comparison between the Jews and nominal Christians who have “some knowledge and background in the faith.” Reference to Scripture makes sense to postmodern people who have connections to the church. Gentiles, however, represent the “radically unchurched” in Reid’s model. Reid suggests that “we need ‘sensory apologetics’ to reach a postmodern culture.” In this approach, the witness tells the “story of how God relates to man.” Similarly, Schweizer contends that the apostolic witness to Gentiles promotes the “theological” kerygma.


19Ibid., 235.

20Ibid., 236.

21E. Schweizer, “Concerning the Speeches in Acts,” 214. This is in contrast to a “christological” kerygma.
The personal witness shares the story of Christ’s work in the individual’s life. Indeed, Dieter Zander suggests that this is the most authoritative connection to the postmodern generation. Evangelism that is effective to postmodern people communicates the personal story of salvation and forgiveness.22

The metanarrative of the gospel finds connection with the postmodern person through the personal testimony of the believer.23 The postmodern culture communicates knowledge through the fluidity of the spoken word. The reception of this knowledge depends upon the oral devices, such as rhythmic balance, formulaic patterns, proverbs, mnemonic aids, and other tools to provide associative remembrance in the minds of the hearers. The narrator moves to the point of action in the story rather than following a linear plot. In the telling of the story, the hearers become active participants in the creation of the narrative. The culture communicates truth by story.24


In his description of conversion, E. Y. Mullins describes personal evangelism: “Christ is presented to the soul. A new sense of sin is awakened through the power of the Holy Spirit within. At length the will is surrendered to God in Christ.”\(^{25}\) The communication of the gospel of Christ to the soul of the postmodern person comes most readily through the personal story of the witness.

As Jensen states, “Stories work by indirection. Working indirectly they have a chance to break through the cultural filters that work in the heads of those who listen.”\(^{26}\) Through the use of story, the witness creates an “affective experience for the audience of a sermon.”\(^{27}\)

Listeners are provided room to overhear this kind of “message,” to bridge the distance and choose to participate because they identify with the experience created and the impetus to act evoked by the speaker’s own encounter with “meaning.” The goal of this kind of preaching is to create an experience of the word of God in listeners within a range of possible responses rather than trying to control the specific response.\(^{28}\)

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\(^{28}\)Ibid.
Erickson suggests that “we may need to modify the way in which we do the leading or present the message. This may mean that a more narrative presentation, not in the hermeneutical or heuristic but in the communicational sense of narrative, will have to be the beginning of the conversation.”

This provides the foundation for witness. The role of the Spirit, the ethic of a commendable community, and the personal witness join to provide an effective evangelistic presentation to postmodern people.

J. I. Packer summarizes the role of personal evangelism.

Evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners. Anyone who faithfully delivers that message, under whatever circumstances... is evangelizing. Since the divine message finds its climax in a plea from the Creator to a rebel world to turn and put faith in Christ, the delivering of it involves the summoning of one’s hearers to conversion. If you are not, in this sense, seeking to bring about conversions, you are not evangelizing; this we have seen already. But the way to tell whether in fact you are evangelizing... is to ask whether you are faithfully making known the gospel message.

Personal evangelism in an apostolic approach presents the story of the gospel through the lens of personal experience.

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The Power for Personal Evangelism, Rom 15:17-21

The various obstacles for personal evangelism in a postmodern world necessitate the empowerment of the witness. Without the power of the Spirit in an apostolic approach, personal evangelism may be just another story among stories. The apostle Paul provides insight into the power in an apostolic approach to personal evangelism (Rom 15:17-21). In this passage, the apostle demonstrates the role of the Spirit which empowers him πεπληρωκέναι το εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 15:19). This empowerment comes through σημείων καὶ τεράτων. Mark Saucy suggests that “the church is empowered to preach by the Spirit (Acts 1:8), and it works miracles through the Spirit.” Unger indicates that such miraculous signs of God’s presence in the apostolic community have ceased. Yet, the presence of the miraculous demonstration of God’s presence in the apostolic community regularly accompanies the evangelistic ministry of the church in Acts.


32“To have made full the gospel of Christ.”

33Mark Saucy, “Miracles and Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God,” Bibliotheca Sacra 153 (July 1996): 286.

This writer proposes that the manifestation of the Spirit’s work in the church continues to play an important role. This is not to embrace wholeheartedly the “power evangelism” of John Wimber, but it is to acknowledge in a postmodern setting the necessity of the Spirit’s therapeutic work of power through an apostolic approach for evangelism.

In connection with the source of power, the place of prayer highlights a significant avenue for empowerment in personal evangelism (Col 4:2-6). Prayer plays a major role in Paul’s evangelistic ministry. In the contemporary church, prayer should accompany the evangelistic enterprise with postmodern people, “so that the mystery of the indwelling Christ may be proclaimed (4:2-4).”

In Eph 6:18, Paul calls the apostolic community to pray ἐν πνεύματι. Through prayer, individual witnesses experience the overflow of God’s power for evangelism.

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Furthermore, Paul’s exhortation for the life controlled by the Spirit presents a prerequisite for empowerment in personal evangelism (Eph 5:18). Mussies concludes that the present tense of the imperative, πληροῦσθε, calls for a consistent, continual manner of life. Dana and Mantey suggest that ἐν πνεύματι is instrumental, so that the meaning is “by means of the Spirit.”

Fee notes that this reference points to the community experience, as well as the individualistic experience. As such, the phrase points to the apostolic ethic within the community. Köstenberger notes that the Spirit permeates the life of the witness, manifested in wisdom (Eph 5:17-18), “grateful worship” (5:19-20), and relationships following the principle of love (5:21-6:9).

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Obstacles for Personal Evangelism

The postmodern world presents obstacles of paganism and persecution for personal evangelism. A “stubbornly entrenched paganism” is one obstacle to apostolic witness.44 Simon in Samaria (Acts 8:9), Elymas in Paphos (Acts 13:6-8), and the Hellenistic paganism (Acts 14:8-18; 16:16-19; 17:5-9, 16-34) depict the paganism that pervaded the cultural landscape of the first-century. This paganism presented an obstacle to the evangelistic efforts of the apostolic church.45 The contemporary church faces this same obstacle. Postmodern people have a “healthy spiritual appetite” that drives them “to seek our mystical experiences, developing their own unique religious faith.”46 The dismissal of foundations, the relativism of truth, and the pluralism that define postmodernism create fertile ground for the development of unique religious, syncretistic beliefs.

44Autrey, Evangelism in the Acts, 71.


Based upon various mystical experiences and philosophies from a multitude of religious circles, postmodern people embrace a contemporary form of paganism.\(^{47}\)

Luke reports that many Samaritans επίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ εὐαγγελιζομένῳ περί τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὄνοματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Acts 8:12).\(^{48}\) The healing and exorcisms (Acts 8:7) serve as “visible ‘signs’ confirming the message that he proclaimed.”\(^{49}\) Luke presents Simon of Samaria as a pagan counterpart to Philip and the apostolic ministry (Acts 8:9-11).\(^{50}\) Simon receives baptism along with other converts, but then he considers the acquisition of miraculous power “a matter of greed rather than grace (8:14-23),” offering money to Peter for the power of the Spirit.\(^{51}\)

\(^{47}\)These religious circles may even be contradictory.

\(^{48}\)“[They] believed Philip as he preached the good news concerning the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ.” In Acts 13:6-8, Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind by God which led to the conversion of Sergius Paulus.


\(^{50}\)See Edwin Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 57-63. Although it is beyond the reach of this dissertation, later tradition assigns to Simon Magus the origination of the Gnostic heresy denounced by Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Hippolytus.

This encounter of Phillip and Peter with Simon reveals the nature of personal evangelization before the obstacle of paganism in a postmodern milieu. First, the personal witness must proclaim the gospel. Unlike Simone Weil, the apostolic approach seeks to evangelize individuals who adhere to any spiritual pursuit other than Christ Jesus. Weil considers that such evangelization discounts the spiritual pursuits of individuals and the possibility that the cross affects the same benefit of salvation to these pursuits which are “not too unsuitable for pronouncing the name of the Lord.” For an apostolic approach, however, the proclamation of the gospel confronts the postmodern “carnivalesque world of multiple constructions of reality” and demonstrates the “ongoing drama of God’s redemption of the world” through Jesus Christ. The presentation of the gospel in the power of the Spirit produces the foundations for faith in Jesus in the face of postmodern paganism.

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52 Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1951), 185. Weil offers this conclusion based upon spiritual pursuits of individuals since she includes those who have embraced a native religion as well as those who have not embraced any formal religion.


54 M. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 132. “The *dunamis* shown by the Christians appealed to a magician like Simon Magus or Elymas.”
Secondly, an apostolic approach corrects any syncretistic tendency in the evangelization of postmodern people. Peter corrects Simon’s misconception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:20-24). In Lystra Paul and Barnabas εὐαγγελιζόμενοι ἦσαν (Acts 14:7). After healing a lame man, the people seek to worship the missionaries as οἱ θεοὶ ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις (Acts 14:11). As Neil suggests, “This fascinating glimpse of the superstitious pagan background of the Empire suggests the magnitude of the problem facing early Christian missionaries.”\textsuperscript{55} The apostolic approach confers no affiliation with the paganism of the people, but calls for them ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν ματαιῶν ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ θεὸν ζωὴν (Acts 14:15).\textsuperscript{56} An apostolic approach diligently presents the good news of Jesus Christ as the unique and supreme avenue for salvation. In an apostolic approach, personal evangelism refuses to accommodate the gospel to the spiritual “postmodern theater pieces,” which mesh to form a complex of spiritual claims embraced by individuals. Rather, the apostolic approach presents the gospel as the only true story of God’s salvation to humanity.


\textsuperscript{56}“To turn from these vain things toward the living God.”
Persecution also presents an obstacle to personal evangelism in an apostolic approach. An examination of the persecutions in Acts reveals that the gospel encounters specific opposition from the Jewish community. The apostolic approach in the face of persecution may be summarized by Peter’s words in Acts 5:30: \( \tau\epsilon \iota \alpha \rho \chi\epsilon\iota \nu \delta\epsilon \iota \theta\epsilon\omega \mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron \nu \acute{\alpha} \nu \theta\rho\omicron\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu \varsigma \). In the face of persecution, the apostolic church continues to evangelize. Yet, the “Christian witness does not prevail . . . because of human tenacity but by divine empowerment.”

Jewish persecution in Jerusalem occurs in response to the growth of the Christian witness in Jerusalem. The animosity of the Jewish leaders focuses upon the apostolic witness that they were responsible for Christ’s passion. Opposition to Stephen, which leads to his death, begins with a debate with the \( \sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\omicron\omega\gamma\eta\varsigma \tau\acute{\iota} \lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu \varsigma \Lambda\nu\beta\epsilon\beta\tau\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\varsigma \) (Acts 6:9).

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Stephen’s defense speech considers the history of God’s people apart from any temple. The evangelistic importance of Stephen’s speech culminates in his martyrdom (Acts 7:54-60). Upon Stephen’s death, the persecution scatters the apostolic community (Acts 8:1-3). Encouraged by the boldness and faith of Stephen in martyrdom, the apostolic community διήλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον (Acts 8:4).

Later, when Paul and Barnabas proclaim the gospel in Iconium, the Jews stir up opposition (Acts 14:1-7). As Rapske notes: “Relying upon the Lord, they speak fearlessly (Acts 14:3) concerning God’s grace and their message is confirmed by miraculous signs and wonders.” This boldness exemplifies an apostolic approach throughout Luke’s account. This boldness depends upon the empowerment of the Spirit to “fulfil [sic] the divine plan” and to “to carry on through the negative effects of opposition and persecution.”

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61 “[They] went everywhere preaching the good news of the word.” M. Green, Evangelism in the Early Church, 131-32. Green suggests that “Stephen did more for his Master in his death than he did in his life” because of the appeal his courage and faith presented to the ancient world.


63 Ibid., 250.
In a postmodern world, persecution finds its main expression in the intellectual realm. The pluralism of postmodernism disdains the absolutism of the gospel. Persecution comes in the arena of public discourse. The "claim to absoluteness and exclusivity of Christianity" presents one reason for animosity toward an apostolic witness to Jesus Christ. This "totalizing metanarrative" remains untenable in a postmodern setting for personal evangelism. An apostolic approach, however, depends upon the "unstoppable character of Christian witness" through the direct influence and empowerment of the Spirit of truth.

Finding Common Ground, 1 Cor 9:19-23

Personal evangelism to postmodern people demands a biblical principle of accommodation (1 Cor 9:19-23).

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66 B. Rapske, "Opposition to the Plan of God and Persecution," 256. Furthermore, "Through such tokens as earthquakes, miraculous releases from prison and visions, the Lord gives both [H]is people, and [H]is plan which they pursue, an unqualified, 'Yes'."

Leith Anderson suggests that “Paul should be seen as a skilled ethnologist who understood cultures while communicating truth.”

Paul’s example of combining ethnology and exegesis serves as an apostolic approach in evangelizing postmodern people. Dunn suggests that “Paul allowed circumstances and situations to determine the statement of his kerygma to a considerable degree.”

This accommodation, however, has limits. As Ben Witherington states, “[Paul’s] accommodating behavior has clear limits. He does not say that he became an idolator [sic] to idolators [sic] or an adulterer to adulterers. But in matters that he did not see as ethically or theologically essential or implied by the gospel, Paul believed in flexibility.”

This concept of accommodation promotes the discovery of “common ground” between the postmodern culture and the gospel. Finding common ground, within limits, provides a bridge for personal evangelism. Such accommodation promotes a flexibility, but not compromise.

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John Frame contends that there are “some areas in which Christians may and should be like those to whom they preach, so their witness may be more effective.” 71 Simply stated, a personal witness who is “open to beginning where people are, will thus discover that the unchaining of his or her own imagination is indispensable to reaching secular people.” 72

As noted earlier, such common ground may be found in the postmodern search for a better story, for connection, and for a better life. 73 One aspect of a better story is the postmodern desire to discover a story that overcomes the powers of evil in the world. Webber suggests that evangelism in a postmodern world proclaims that “Christ’s death is a victory over the powers of evil.” 74 The common ground of connection promotes the commendable community of the church following the ethics of the apostolic community. The church is the place of connection in a postmodern world.


72 George Hunter III, How to Reach Secular People (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 95.

73 See chapter one, “Possible Opportunities for Evangelism.”

Craig Van Gelder suggests that effective evangelization of postmodern people demands “building communities of faith and addressing fragmentation and brokenness.”\textsuperscript{75} Finally, evangelism to postmodern people finds common ground with them as they seek a better life. As Harry Lee Poe writes, “We have nothing to offer the postmodern world in terms of organizations, programs, institutions, and structures. What we have to offer is a concrete basis for peace in a fragmented world. We have a Savior to offer . . . a Savior who will put their house in order.”\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{Application of an Apostolic Approach}

An apostolic approach proceeds from the power of witness through the outpouring of the Spirit of truth. The Spirit of truth provides the epistemological bridge for the postmodern skepticism. The Spirit establishes community, which, in turn, creates a place of nurture, growth, and warmth in the evangelistic endeavor. The Spirit of truth further produces connection and continuity with Christ through the inspiration and illumination of Scripture.\textsuperscript{77}


\textsuperscript{76}Harry Lee Poe, \textit{Christian Witness in a Postmodern World} (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 74.

The ethic of community extends intimacy to postmodern people and provides a living testament to the veracity of the gospel proclaimed. The apostolic approach provides specific approaches to pluralities and pluralism in the postmodern world, especially in Paul’s speech at the Areopagus. Finally, the personal evangelism in a postmodern milieu requires the witness of personal story, the spirit-filled life which overcomes the obstacles of persecution and paganism, and the pursuit of common ground with postmodern people. The contemporary church seeks to build bridges to a postmodern world through the evangelistic proclamation of the gospel.

The search for salvation and forgiveness continues in a postmodern world. Shaw summarizes the situation when he writes: “The shift to a new culture type [postmodern] does not change the human condition, merely the way it is manifest in daily living. It is in relationship . . . with Christ that we realize salvation.”

The presentation of this approach possesses both weaknesses and strengths in the mind of this writer. One possible weakness of this presentation is the danger of the oversimplification of the postmodern thought and situation.

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The reality of postmodernism is complex, with a multitude of various versions and concerns. This writer has chosen to paint broad strokes in his description of postmodernism. In such a description, the danger by which specific patterns of postmodernism are chosen to fit the argument of the thesis. Although this writer has attempted to minimize this danger, it presents one weakness of the approach.

Secondly, the presentation of this approach may present the weakness of insufficient engagement with the complexities of postmodernism. As Erickson suggests, ministry to postmodern people requires that the contemporary church adopt some of the characteristics of postmodernism. This writer, however, has sought to present the “self-authenticating character of the biblical message . . . combined with a strong belief in the convicting, illuminating power of the Holy Spirit.” As such, there may exist at points a failure to address specific postmodern issues in an effort to maintain an overall connection with the approach for evangelization depicted in Acts and the Pauline epistles.

Thirdly, this analysis does not consider completely the current status of technology in the postmodern world.

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79 M. Erickson, Postmodernizing the Faith, 100.
80 Ibid., 153.
As Leonard Sweet points out, the contemporary church must minister to the “virtual world” of postmodern people, utilizing the technological opportunities in a postmodern world. The relationship between technology and an apostolic approach may be fertile field for further study. Certainly, other weaknesses of this approach occur. These three, however, present the major limitations that this dissertation presents in the mind of this writer.

The strengths of this presentation of an apostolic approach center upon the strict correlation between contemporary ministry and the biblical pattern. George Peters indicates that the record of the apostolic community is the primary source for world evangelism and church growth. This record includes: 1) the Spirit as the divine Agent; 2) the apostles as the divine representatives; 3) witness as the major means; 4) Jesus Christ as the content; and 5) the world as the object. The approach of this dissertation follows a similar analysis and promotes a strong connection with the biblical paradigm for evangelism. As such, the Bible represents the authority for praxis.

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Furthermore, as Douglas Blount states, “If contemporary Christians are to find a paradigm suitable to the commitments of that ancient faith which they have come to embrace . . . it will be by resituating [sic] themselves within the spiritual tradition initiated by their ancient Christian forebears.”83

Secondly, this presentation finds strength in the community ethic. This provides a connection between postmodernism and the gospel. The community is the visible, vital expression of the gospel at work in the world. In this way, the message of the gospel remains unchanged, but the community itself provides a flexible, relevant appeal to postmodern people.84 Dieter Zander notes that the authenticity of the gospel manifested in the lives of Christ’s followers attracts postmodern people to the gospel.85 It is the contention of this writer that there is no greater community in the world to which postmodern people may connect than the apostolic community in the twenty-first century.


84M. Erickson, Postmodernizing the Faith, 152.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, this presentation of an apostolic approach for the evangelization of postmodern people concludes as does the record of Acts in chapter 28. An apostolic approach results in “a people divided over the Christian message, some believing, others unbelieving.”86 The mission, however, remains the same: “[They] went everywhere preaching the good news of the word” (Acts 8:4).

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