

An Investigation of Postmodernism and Its Implications for the Contemporary Church

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DOI: [10.56201/ijrcp.vol.10.no3.2025.pg20.34](https://doi.org/10.56201/ijrcp.vol.10.no3.2025.pg20.34)

Abstract

Postmodernism is a philosophical idea that negates absolute truth, universal standard and traditional authority, but fosters personal experience, individualism and diversity. It poses great threat to the church. Its implications for the contemporary church include: disloyalty and attacks to the authority, self-deception, apostasy, individualism, moral laxity and excessive quest for material things. Church's responses to postmodernism's challenges are teaching on morality and truth, preservation of morality and good heritage, book publication and living an exemplary life.

Key words: *postmodernism, truth, absolute, and objectivism*

Introduction

This paper investigates postmodernism and its implications for contemporary Church. Postmodernism is a philosophical teaching that denies absolute truth, traditional authorities and universal principles, but promotes subjective experience, ambiguity and diversity. Postmodernism induces significant challenges to the contemporary church. Its implications include: disloyalty and attacks to authority, self-deception, apostasy, individualism and diversity, moral laxity and excessive quest for material things. Church's responses to the challenges of postmodernism include: teaching on morality and truth, preservation of morality and good heritage, book publication and living an exemplary life.

This paper will consider the following sub-headings: Concept of Postmodernism, Biblical Perspectives of Postmodernism, Implications of Postmodernism for Contemporary Church and Church's Responses to the challenges of postmodernism.

Concept of Postmodernism

Postmodernism refers to a philosophical notion that opposes Enlightenment thinking, objective truth, standard values, universal principles, and community norms, emphasizing personal identity, diversity and subjective truth. Peter Takovs and Ngoran Mathew describe postmodernism as a concept with different characteristics which include "denial cum deconstruction of ontology and ontological hierarchies, rejection of metaphysical essentialism, engagement with ambivalence, advocacy for the equality of all opinions, and confusion of identities, dichotomization of sex and gender, rejections of value and atheistic humanism"¹ Postmodernism uses subtlety to integrate

¹ Peter Takov and Ngoran Mathew "Global Journal of Human Social Science: Art Humanities-Psychology" ISSN:2240-460x and print ISSN 0975787x (accessed September 30, 2022).

several forms of falsehood into a seeming attractive notion that many people can accept easily unknowingly. It is a combination of many alternate opinions which do not actually make sense when considered critically. In this regard, Brain Nicol asserts, “Postmodernism is a notoriously slippery and indefinable term.”² It is a single term that connects to several terms, but in a negative and subtle manner.

Key Factors of Postmodernism

Postmodernism has the following factors as its elements and characteristics:

Rejection of Objective Truth and Universal Principles

Postmodernism denies objective truth and universal principles. Its notion on uniqueness of personal opinion makes postmodernism to argue that objective fact and universal principles do not exist. Every projection of absolute truth and general principles to people with postmodern perspective is treated with contempt and mockery. Nathaniel opines that “Postmodernism is a relativistic system of observation and thought that denies absolutes and objectivity.”³ People with postmodern perspective do not believe in a standard rule or principle that guides everyone. Its key term is relativism. Robbert Audi defines relativism as “The denial that there are certain kinds of universal truth.”⁴ Denial of universal truth is one of the elements of postmodernism, which has been used to deceive some people and place them in total slavery.

Emphasis on Subjective Experience and Diversity

Postmodernism stresses individual experience and diversity, opposing objective facts and unity. Postmodernist places great emphasis on personal opinion or individual experience which tends to threaten unity or communal agreement. Diversity is enthroned in all spheres, while unity is opposed. In relation to postmodernism’s emphasis on subjectivism, Isaias notes, “The task to differentiate subjectivity from objectivity is futile since crossing the boundary of each property implies conflict and the eventual domination of one over the other. While it seeks inter-relatedness and interdependence of all things the end result is uncertainty.”⁵ Postmodernism seeks for individual opinion instead of collective principles that guide a group or community. Subjectivism is overemphasized while objectivism is undermined.

Doubting and questioning of Authorities

Postmodernism places a serious doubt on and also questions traditional authorities. In respect to this, people with postmodern notion tend to oppose every aspect of individuals, groups or

² Brain Nicol, Cambridge University Press “Postmodernism and Postmodernity.” <https://www.google.com/ur?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&cpi=89979449&uri=https://www.academia.edu/112126075/introduction-postmodernism-postmodernity&ved=2aUKEwjim8ft-7uJAxusvEEAHR9XBy4QFnoECDkQ&usg-AQvVawOKE4yvRmRmUhFrekiyQ6f> (accessed November 1, 2024).

³ Nathaniel ed., “Postmodernism and the Church” Amazone -Believers Bible Commentary (June 21, 2023) <https://thechristianadvocate.org/postmodernism-and-the-church> (accessed November 18, 2024)

⁴ Robbert Audi- Ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), 690.

⁵ Isaias Catorce, “Postmodernism and its Influence in the Church” (Jan 4, 2013), 3. <https://asburyseminary.edu/elink/post-modernism-its-influence-in-the-church/> (accessed November 2, 2024).

institutions that pose any form of influence, standard or power of decisions based on developed customs, norms or practice in a given community or society. Nathaniel notes, “Generally speaking, we are experiencing postmodernism’s influence in our local churches when we see church attendees wrestling with issues related to relativism, truth and authority. Many members and people attending our churches have grown up and been influenced by a postmodern culture”⁶ The influence of postmodernism on church members sometimes manifests in the form of repeatedly questioning of church authority with eagerness and display of rebellion by some church members.

Deconstruction of Social Realities

Social realities refer to the generally structured, agreed-upon, and acceptable norms, values and principles that influence personal experiences and relationship in a given society. Postmodernism deconstructs social realities by opposing objective truth, common views, acceptable standards, emphasizing multiple interpretations, meanings and understandings. Every way is the way in postmodernism. Postmodernism can be compared with laissez-faire leadership style. In line with laissez-faire leadership Iruoma Iheanyi H. admits “This implies that under this kind of leadership, there is always confusion and bewilderment. There is no decision. There is no specified way, wherefore every path becomes a way.”⁷ Postmodernism makes everything relative including truth, opinion, decision and principles. Little wonder it enslaves people without their knowledge.

Tolerance of Ambiguity

Postmodernism emphasizes openness to diverse interpretations, meaning and understandings, which can sometimes lead to vagueness or complexity in certain contexts.

Thomas R. Schreiner declares, “Most souls are homeless and the reality of truth is itself denied. Postmodern Americans accept meaning as a replacement for truth and exchange worldview as quickly as they try on new cloth,”⁸ Any moment truth is replaced with personal opinions, then postmodernism has set it. It is factual that truth is always objective and can never be substituted. When people yield to various interpretations, confusion sets and truth is wobbled.

Biblical Perspectives of postmodernism

Bible does not address postmodernism directly because it is a modern philosophical notion, but since the Bible is the “Ancient current”. In other words, it possesses timeless relevance, addressing and applicable to past and present situations. It has principles that address postmodernism as could be seen below:

Proclamation of Absolute Truth

Jesus refers Himself as the “Truth” (John 14:6). Similarly, Timothy addresses the church as the pillar and foundation of Truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The use of Truth here is peculiar to God, and it is never relative. No one else projects Truth and life like Christ. Such person does not exist. There is no any other Truth as Christ nor a body of Truth as the church. However, postmodernism rejects absolute truth like Christ, the Bible and the church.

⁶ Nathaniel.

⁷ Iruoma Iheanyi H. *Applied Church Administration*. (Owerri: Nigeria by Okson Publishers, 2003), 158.

⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, ed., *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology: Evangelism in a New Century* vol 5: No 1, (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), 18

Postmodernism has actually brought certain benefits like confidence in oneself, acknowledgement of individual rights, privileges and values. Nevertheless, mere looking at the challenges of postmodernism one could see problems and dangers emanating from them. Andrew Moody acknowledges certain problems of postmodernism which should not be neglected. He asserts that “postmodernism subordinates’ truth to identity.”⁹ He points out that “Its much emphasis on identity makes it to ‘over value identity and undervalue truth’”¹⁰ Any philosophical notion or idea that undermines truth is antichristian and should be reevaluated.

Projection of Reality

The work of creation is made manifest to all humans. It is never a hidden venture. It can be observed with human eyes, felt and experienced in daily living ((Psalm 19:1-6: Rom 1:19-20)). However, postmodernism tends to deny this reality. Nathaniel opines, “...we see our church attendees influenced by postmodernism when they tend to base views more upon personal preferences and experiences rather than on absolute truths taught in God’s word.”¹¹ Postmodernism has so much influenced people that truth is refuted, but Bible makes everything clear that nothing can be denied. Nathaniel also explains, “Postmodern culture has influenced the church toward a relativistic mindset. But the fact of the matter is, when it comes to God and His Word, personal feelings-simply doesn’t count.”¹² There is no mincing of words when it comes to the absoluteness of the Scriptures. The authority of the Bible is final.

Affirmation of Scriptures Over Personal Experience

The Bible is solemnly the Word of God. It is the breath of God and never human product. This is what Timothy emphasizes ((2 Tim 3:16-17). Conversely, Jesus rebukes the pharisees and teachers of the law for prioritizing and overemphasizing personal experience or human opinions (tradition of elders) over the Scriptures. (Mat 15:1-9). Similarly, postmodernism regards the Scriptures as subjective with a claim that there is nothing like objective truth. It sees the scriptures as the components of human opinions or subjective views.

Apostle Peter also emphasises that the Scriptures is God’s product and never humans (2 Peter 1:20,21). In connection to that Barton Bruce submits, “Bible is not a collection of fables or of human ideas about God. It is God’s very words given through people. Peter emphasizes his authority as an eye witness as well as the God-inspired authority of Scripture to prepare the way for his attack on false teachers. If these wicked men contradict the apostles and the Bible, their message cannot come from God”¹³. Postmodernism deceives people by presenting the Scriptures as being subjective. Bible maintains its claims as the authoritative word of God, and this cannot be disclaimed.

⁹ Moody, Andrew “5 Problems with Postmodernism” (July 2018) <https://www.Google.com/amp//5/ou-gospel-coalition/article/5-problems-postmodersim/> (accessed November, 2022).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Nathaniel.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Barton Bruce, ed., *Life Application study Bible* (Illinois: Tyndale Housen Publishers, 1996), 2507.

Some people have been trapped by the influence of postmodernism without their knowledge. According to Steve Golden, “Postmodernism is at the root of many attacks on the authority of God’s Word today. Many people do not realize that they and their children are being quietly indoctrinated into postmodernism philosophies. While these ideas promise liberation and tolerance, they run entirely counter to Scripture and produce enslavement to the world and death”¹⁴ postmodernism attempts to projects the word of God in a way people can live care free lives, but on the contrary places them in desperate situations. This happens when they start witnessing the consequences of living contrary to biblical teachings.

Recognition of Authority and Tradition

The Bible recognizes the ecclesiastical authorities and certain body of teachings, practices and interpretations (Mat 15:1-9; 1 Cor 11:2) that were carried down from Jewish leaders and teachers from one era to another (tradition of elders). On the contrary, postmodernism negates and disregards any form of body of teachings that provides guidance, direction or that posits any form of influence on people. Walter Elwell quotes Jean Paul Sartre who says that postmodernism “today, often applied to virtually anything that overruns traditional standards and is thus perceived to promote relativism (moral or otherwise)”¹⁵ The notion of postmodernism that everything is relative equally makes it to reject authority and traditional standards. However, any notion that negates authority and tradition that are recognized by Bible is anti-Christian. It should be avoided. Stephen R. C. Hicks says Postmodernism often bills itself as anti-philosophical, by which it means that it rejects many traditional philosophical alternatives.”¹⁶ Postmodernism rejects anything that emphasizes tradition even when it is an acceptable guideline for a group or individuals.

Values or Contributions of Postmodernism

Postmodernism has several advantages or contributions to the society and the church. Below are some of them:

1. Confidence in Oneself

Postmodernism promotes personal confidence. It exerts a unique influence on people. This makes them to believe in themselves totally. People are able to carry out their will, desires, and employ their skills and talents at work without considering if they are believed or not. This has been a great secret to some successful people in the world.

2. Acknowledgements of Individual Rights, Privileges/Values

Postmodernism infuses people with perseverance and optimism which make them curious and eager to know their rights, privileges and values as well. Andrew Moddy asserts that” Postmodernism has actually brought certain benefits like confidence in oneself, acknowledgement

¹⁴ Steve Gold, “The Influence of Postmodernism” (2013) https://answersingenesis.org/world-religions/humanism/the-influence-of-posmodernism-part-1-introduction/?srsltid=AmfBOcpSSAUlpNYqswQ5A3wLvrrdDittenu0FjyNnk4gz1jBNT_ycKUI (accessed November 18, 2024).

¹⁵ Elwell, Walter A., *Evangelical Dictionary of theology. Second Edition*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academics, 2007) ,939.

¹⁶ Stephen R. C. Hicks, *Explaining postmodernism*, (New Berling, Scholarly Publishing2004,), 6.

of individual rights, privileges and values.”¹⁷ Acknowledgement of individual’s right, privileges and values influences people to do exploits.

3. Personal Development

Postmodernism helps to build oneself. Its emphasis on subjectivism or personal experience gives room for personal development. People tend to develop themselves more when their ideas, opinions or personal experiences are considered or regarded.

4. Recognition of the changing Nature of society, Structure and Process

Postmodernism attempts to acknowledge the ongoing shifts and changes in the society. It considers social, political, economic and technological changes that create a transition between past and the present eras. It helps to know what is ancient and modern; and how what is considered ancient can be reevaluated.

5. Challenging of Assumptions

Postmodernism challenges assumptions by questioning beliefs, norms or ideas that were considered absolute. Certain old norms, ideas and beliefs have become so methodical that they do not work with the present era anymore. However, postmodernism queries such assumptions and seeks for re-evaluation. A knowledgeable source opines that postmodernism “recognizes the changing nature of society and social structures/processes and challenges our assumptions.”¹⁸ If certain assumptions are not challenged, it may be difficult to reevaluate certain old traditions, which has become a kind of slavery or living in bondage to people at the present era.

Implications of Postmodernism for Contemporary Church

1. Questioning of Authority and Disloyalty

Church members can easily question church authority, tradition, leadership and scriptures as well. For postmodernists, the Bible is neither regarded as the absolute Truth, nor is it perceived as the source of direction, sustenance and living, but as an embodiment of subjective principles or human opinions. In respect to that, postmodernism questions the authority of the Bible, traditional principles and ecclesiastical leadership. Isaiahs asserts

Postmodernism with all forms of subtlety has successfully produced disloyalty and attacks to authority. The discussion about postmodernism paves the way to investigate the present status of the youth’s culture which if properly analysed and studied will benefit their engagement to a pluralistic society for a meaningful proclamation of the good News of Christ.¹⁹

These characteristics of postmodernism creates room for the emergence of arrogance, disobedience or disrespect of all kinds in the church beyond explanation and control. Some church members, especially the teenagers and the youths have little or no regard for the teachings of the Scriptures, church tradition or the church leadership.

¹⁷ Moody.

¹⁸ -‘Postmodernism’ <https://www.studysmarter.com.uk/explanations/social studies/theories-and-methods/postmodernism/> (accessed 28th November 2024).

¹⁹ Isaiahs, 3.

Isaias observes that

postmodernism seeks to dismantle Christianity by overturing traditional standards and binary oppositions. It is designed to construct values and meaning by not setting off two opposite statements against one another but through a semiotic analysis. While postmodernism proposes harmony and community, it is done at the expense of deconstructing established texts, structures, arts and systems. It does not propose permanence of principles because it affirms relativity to any given place, person and time.²⁰

Postmodernism plunges people into mores serious problems by restructuring views, suggesting varied meanings and fostering diverse interpretations to already generalized truth. Alan R. Tippet remarks, “When any philosophy or ideology opposes God, it is no longer primarily political but spiritual.”²¹ A philosophical notion or idea that opposes God needs to be restructured or reformed.

2. Democratization of Spiritual Guidance

Postmodernism believes that truth is subjective, therefore it does not see the need of guidance from the pastors or ministers of the gospel. It is believed that everyone knows what is right and can guide themselves. This simply means that the roles of pastors are no longer needed.

3. The Erosion of Moral Absolute

Postmodernism substitutes truths for falsehood. In respect to that, morality is thrown overboard. Some members of the church indulge in prostitution without seeing anything bad in it. Immorality is highly enthroned to the extent that it has moved from the pew to the pulpit. Some ministers of the gospel yield to sexual immorality at will without considering it to be anything.

David Jernander frankly laments “The church has been silent on the sins of sexual immorality and its associated consequences, and as some would say, to remain neutral between right and wrong is to side with wrong.”²² He also says “the society has failed because we live in an age where God is almost an afterthought. When you have no reference point from which your morals and ethics are derived, everyone does what is right in their own eyes.”²³ The influence of postmodernism leads to immorality in the church and in the society. Yet, it is done boldly and without any form of regret or remorse.

4. A Challenge or Threat to Christian Fellowship

Christian gatherings or fellowships are built and maintained by acceptable codes, norms and biblical principles and Truth. Nevertheless, postmodernism renders these gatherings and fellowships useless and worthless. Its emphasis on relativism of truth makes it negate every fellowship and gathering that are guided and maintained by specific laws, principles or standards, including biblical Truth.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Alan R. Tippet, *Introduction to Missiology*, (California: William Carey Library, nd.), 103.

²² David Jernander, “Why Sexual Immorality is a Problem in the Church & Society-Part 1” (March 19, 2023), <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-sexual-immorality-problem-church-society-part-1-david-jernander>, (accessed 11December, 2024).

²³ Jernander.

Self-Deception

Postmodern perspective that truth is relative and morality is subjective poses a significant threat to the church. In that truth and morality are minimized or undermined as a result of false view of postmodernism. In line with the belief of postmodernism Walter A Elwell quotes Nietzsche who says, “the truth is that there is no truth.”²⁴ Postmodernism denies absolute truth because everyone’s opinion is taken to be right. Everybody claims to be right. Every opinion is not right as postmodernism claims. The Bible stands to condemn every thought that does not align with the thought of God. God’s thought outweighs human thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). With regard to the unfortunate implications of postmodernism Isaias Catorce laments,

There is no objective moral standard by which we can base absolute judgement and establish demarcations to truths and fallacies. Thus, the statement: ‘True to you but not for me’ the deadly poison spewed by postmodernism is treating the Bible is not something unique or distinct from all other books. The fates of the Laws of God are simple suggestions, or just another way of looking at reality and could not be used as a fundamental base to enforce judgement.²⁵

Any philosophical notion or idea that denies the claim of the Scriptures as the Absolute Truth and source of morality is a total departure from life and needs to be refuted. Ofcourse, postmodernism has made itself one of them, signifying the need for being jettisoned from the household of God.

Apostasy

The influence of postmodernism has made some Christians to backslide, yet pressing on with their normal service in the church and also occupying their positions and offices. The church has been seriously attacked as people with postmodern view infiltrate the church daily. Catorce admits, “I’m sure it is clear to see by now that the church hasn’t escaped from postmodernism. In America, apostasy has reared its ugly head in the church. The church is under attack and one of the enemy’s weapons is postmodernism.”²⁶ Postmodernism’s nuanced perspective has caused a gradually drift of some believes from the faith to the world, yet retaining a nominal connection in the Church.

Catorce continues, “The worldly thinking of the postmodernists has infiltrated the church making it more and more worldly. Church leaders should be led by the Holy Spirit. But He (the Holy Spirit) is slowly being replaced by a different spirit.”²⁷ It is pathetic that the church leaders who ought to be models for the projection of truth, have been yoked by the influenced of postmodernism, by yielding to varied opinions that suppress the Truth of the Scriptures and ignorantly substituted The Holy Spirit for other spirits.

One of the apostatic manifestations of some Christians as a result of postmodernism is rooted in liberality or the spirit of freedom. John R Franke asserts, “But one of the great dangers of the freedom engendered by plurality is that it easily becomes the basis for discord and hostility as each asserts their freedom over against others,”²⁸ People with postmodern view believe in liberty

²⁴ Walter 942.

²⁵ Catorce, 3.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Catorce.

²⁸ John R Franke,ed. “The goodness and Importance of Unity” *Nurturing Faith: Journal and Bible Studies*, (Np: Walker Knight, 2017),18.

and advocate for freedom of expression. Unfortunately, certain freedom is drawn to the extreme where it becomes a threat to the spiritual life of the church.

Franke adds,

Paul warns about this in his letter to the churches in Galatia.: ‘For you were called to freedom, brother and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘you shall love your neighbour as yourself,’ If however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5:13-15)”²⁹

When personal freedom or liberty begins to infringe upon individual’s rights, comfort or convenience, it has to be discouraged.

Individualism and Diversity

Postmodernism celebrates differences and promotes diversity, which causes much harm to the church. Individualism and diversity threaten team spirit or unity which ought to be a backbone or a basis for accomplishing church goals and objectives. Emiola Nihinlola posits that “Participation, unity and cooperation are also core values of African life”³⁰. Postmodernism negates participation and cooperation, but clines to diversity. No wonder love seems to be lacking in different local churches. Emiola outrightly declares, “Individualism is as evil in traditional African society. ‘Ka fi owo we owo ni owo fi mo’ is a Yoruba proverb meaning ‘two hands wash each other’ better”³¹ Individualism alters the language of unity which is the language of the Bible (Ps 133:1; Prov 27:17). Two heads are better than one. (Eccl. 4:9). This is a serious threat to the church.

The horror of the implications of postmodernism for the church is quite enormous. It increases day by day. If unity is destroyed in the church, fellowship and cooperate worship will also be affected directly or indirectly. John Enyinnaya points out that “In God’s plan, the church is supposed to be a signpost to this unity, a living testimony to humanity that such unity is possible. The dilemma today is that the church has consistently failed to live up to God’s expectations in this area.”³² If the church that is expected to take the lead in promotion of unity is found wonton in this regard, it means that there is a significant issue that should not be underestimated-the influence of postmodernism.

Excessive Quest for Material Acquisition

As far as postmodernism is concerned, the only thing that matters is what leads to material abundance and never what leads to truth. People do all sort of things to acquire material things. Conscience is sealed and does not scrutinize any activity anymore. Things are said to be good, if they provide solutions to problems. Many things are turned upside down. Thomas R. Schreiner, comments

²⁹ Franke

³⁰ Emiola Nihinlola, *Theology Under the mango Tree, A Hand Book of African Christian Theology*, (Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary; 2018), 180.

³¹ Ibid.

³² John Oluchi Enyinnaya, *Theological incongruence in Africa and the Search for a theological fit for the people of God*, (Ogbomoso: Kingdom Impact Publishing and Media Ltd., 2023),60.

We are called to serve the cause of Christ at one of the crucial turning points in human history. The generations now living have witnessed an explosion of knowledge, the collapse of distance, and the rising and falling of empires. Cultures and societies have been radically transformed. Expansive wealth has brought great material comfort, but the most basic structures of society are undermined. Families are fractured, lawless abounds, violence invades, and media bring a constant stream of chaos into our lives.³³

In a verge to project wisdom that can bring solutions to situations, postmodernism promotes confusion, chaos and divisions in many families, groups, and church as well. Alister E. McGrath says "...some critics such as Ihab Hassan and Linder Hutcheon view postmodernism as a recuperative way of using the past and charting the future, others such as Charles Newman and Gerald Graff see it as merely fashionable, misguided posture that avoids facing the crisis of global survival."³⁴ Postmodernism does not bring solution to problems but confusion. It does not project truth to uncertainty, rather it emphasizes falsehood. Instead of giving direction, it misguides people and infuses them to greater problems and inescapable danger.

Church's Responses to the Challenges of Postmodernism

The challenges of postmodernism are enormous. They have virtually influenced cultural values, community standards, moral values, norms, realities, universal basics, absolute truth, ecclesiastical principles and traditional authorities. In respect to this, principles and laws that bind church are rejected, rules of ethical conduct are disclaimed, and moral guidelines are abrogated. Responses to the challenges of postmodernism include:

Teaching on Morality and Truth

Africans were known for their interest and respect for collectivism than individualism. They had respect for community laws, social gathering, cultural values and moral standard. These are components and factors that make African culture distinct. Nevertheless, the influence of postmodernism has threatened them to the extent that individualism, personal identity and individual rights and privileges have become the other of the day. "The church should preach a message of moral and spiritual regeneration. The God we serve is a God of truth, righteousness, holiness and justice (Lev 19:2; Exodus 22:8; Isaiah 33:15 Micah 6:8)."³⁵ The church has to embark upon teaching on the necessity of morality and truth. This will go a long way to dethrone the influence of morality in the church.

Preservation of Morality and Good Heritage

Africans have good heritage which teaches respects for elders, communal standards, societal norms, absolute truth, and universal standard. With the inclusion of these, the church should teach its members the need to preserve morality and good heritage, using the Bible as a base or foundation

³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, ed "the Southern Baptist Journal of Theology: evangelism in a New Century," vol 5: N0 1 (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001),18.

³⁴ Alister E. McGrath, ed. *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought*, Maiden Massachusetts, Blackwell Publisher's Inc. 2000),456.

³⁵ Nihinloa, 186.

for morality and good heritage. In relation to the challenges of postmodernism, Simon A. Kolawole sees preservation of good heritage as the major way to respond to the challenges of postmodernism. He exerts “While postmodernism is spreading globally, African can still preserve the good heritage in the face of postmodernism”³⁶ Similarly, the guidelines and principles of the scriptures remain an incomparable heritage from God, which can entirely annihilate the subtlety of postmodernism if taught and preserved through daily living.

Book Publication

The church should embark upon publication of books that expose postmodernism, its challenges or threat to the Christendom and the world at large. Some members in the church, especially the uneducated ones do not fully know what postmodernism is, although they experience its effects. There should be more churches who publish books on postmodernism and who can share these books freely to people at various places. This will help greatly in militating the effects of postmodernism on the church and people outside the church.

Living an Exemplary Life

One of the ways to respond to the challenges of the influence of postmodernism on the church is by living an exemplary life. If church members and leaders alike live a life of examples the influence of postmodernism can be minimal in the church and in the society as well. Nayara Batschke reveals that “Five years after the Satanic Temple of the United States made headlines-and-unleashed a wave of panic- when it was designated a church, a similar organization in Chile, a conservative country where half of its population of 18 million identifies as Catholic, is asking the government to recognize them legally as a religious organization.”³⁷ Looking at this story, it could be understood that some organisations want to operate in disguise of religion to attract people and to gain prominence among the people in the world.

Batschke continues, “Scholars, believers and residents consulted by the Associated Press note that Chile, where a long-lasting tradition of Catholicism has played a leading role in public discussions, is experiencing a crisis of faith, following revelations of multiple sexual abuse scandals within the Catholic church over the years.”³⁸ It was because the church people specifically the Catholic in Chile failed to fulfil their role of showing the light for others to follow that resulted to this kind of apostasy and compromise.

The Bible says “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see you good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mat 5:16) The people of Chile were looking unto the Catholic church which tended to have great influence on the politics, sports, economics, education and other notable areas in that society. However, instead of projecting morality, immorality, especially among the Reverend Father and Sisters became unbearable and bad examples to the people that looked unto them. In respect to that, Satanic organizations emerged to offer supposed better assistance in place of the church they regeared as failures. On the contrary, their assistance became a total slavery and living in bondage.

³⁶ Simeon A. Kolawole “Philosophy and the Challenges of Postmodernism” (2017) <https://ijssmr.org/vol-5-issues-5/african-philosophy-and-the-challenges-of-postmodernism/> (accesses November 18, 2024)

³⁷ Nayara Batschke “The temple of Satan Gains Ground as Faith in Traditional Religions Wanes” (Nov 8 2024) <https://www.yahoo.com/news/temple-satan-gains-ground-chile-043624612html>, accessed November 16, 2024.

³⁸ Ibid.

Batschke adds “While they embrace the term Satanist, they don’t revere or believe in Satan. Instead, they worship rationality, individualism, pleasure and the mundane life. Rather than gods, they praise humankind. ‘You are the owner of your present and future, there is no God that makes decisions for you’ said Haborym, a spokesperson for the group....” This is one of the tricks of Satan and a strategy for wooing people into such groups. People like such freedoms, but on the contrary, Satan gains ground in their lives through this. Postmodernism has exerted significant influence on people’s lives in different forms. However, the church can arise with its life of example to the world as a response to it. “When the body of Christ in Nigeria repents of her sins and purges herself of immorality and corruption, then the church can and should serve as an agent of moral revolution in the nation.”³⁹ An exemplary life begins by repentance. It is seen when people recognize their faults or weaknesses and amend them.

In relation to the influence of postmodernism on some ministers of the gospel, Thomas R. laments,

In a very real sense, the defence of the faith has fallen on hard times. The liberal churches and denominations have so accommodated themselves to modernity that there is virtually nothing left to defend, except perhaps the Golden rule. Postmodernism has been a great gift to the liberal churches, for it has given them new ways to sound like they are saying something without running the risk of offending anyone.⁴⁰

Any moment the church or the ministers of the Gospel take the position of not offending anyone, postmodernism is bound to thrive. The only option is to maintain the biblical standard whether people commend it or frown at it.

Conclusion

This paper has examined postmodernism and its implications for the contemporary church. Postmodernism refers to a philosophical teaching that negates absolute truth, universal norms, principles or authority, but projecting individual’s opinions, experiences and division. Postmodernism has unleashed innumerable terrific tensions to the church. The church is filled up with people who question ecclesiastical leadership and authority. Truth is defied and replaced with falsehood. Some members of the church and church leaders alike have been woven into the postmodern perspective that people are allowed to do what they want without caring if it is good or not.

The researcher submits that though postmodernism has wrecked the church in a bad way, there is a need for the church to arise and respond to this challenge by engaging in effective teaching on morality and truth, publishing books that exposes postmodernism and its influence and living a life that is worthy of emulation.

³⁹ Emiola Nihinlola, *Theology for Theology for Living*, (Ogbomoso: Kingdom Impact 1publishing and Nedia, 2021). 51.

⁴⁰ Schreine, 18.

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Values or Contributions of Postmodern Theology

Postmodernism has several advantages or contributions to humanity. Below are some of them:

6. Confidence in Oneself

Postmodernism promotes personal confidence. It exerts a unique influence on people. This makes them to believe in themselves totally. People are able to carry out their will, desires, and employ their skills and talents at work without considering if they are believed or not. This has been a great secret to some successful people in the world.

7. Acknowledgements of Individual Rights, Privileges/Values

Postmodernism infuses people with perseverance and optimism which make them curious and eager to know their rights, privileges and values as well. Andrew Moddy asserts that "Postmodernism has actually brought certain benefits like confidence in oneself, acknowledgement of individual rights, privileges and values."⁴¹ Acknowledgement of individual's right, privileges and values influences them to do exploits.

8. Personal development

Postmodernism helps to build oneself. Its emphasis on subjectivism and personal experience gives room for personal development. People tend to develop themselves more when their ideas, opinions or personal experiences are considered or regarded.

9. Recognition of the changing Nature of society, Structure and Process

Postmodernism attempts to acknowledge the ongoing shifts and changes in the society. It considers social, political, economic and technological changes that create a transition between past and the present eras. It helps to know what is ancient and modern; and how what is considered ancient can be reevaluated.

10. Challenging of Assumptions

Postmodernism challenges assumptions by questioning beliefs, norms or ideas that were considered absolute. Certain old norms, ideas and beliefs have become so methodical that they do not work with the present era anymore. However, postmodernism queries such assumptions and seeks for re-evaluation. A knowledgeable source opines that postmodernism "recognizes the changing nature of society and social structures/processes and challenges our assumptions."⁴² If certain assumptions are not challenged, it may be difficult to reevaluate certain old traditions, which has become a kind of slavery or living in bondage to people at the present era.

⁴¹ Andrew Moody.

⁴² -'Postmodernism' <https://www.studysmarter.com.uk/explanations/social-studies/theories-and-methods/postmodernism/> (accessed 28th November 2024).