

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Postmodernity: By The Pastoral Perspective Contemporary

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Abstract

The article analyzes the postmodernism, which assumes values relevant to contemporaneity, showing in the first moment what the theorized spirit of postmodernity, in order to summarize the conceptual elements that compose it and its cultural development. Demonstrate as a milestone for this new social moment the influence of architecture, then make the analysis of the emblem of deconstructivism in postmodern society correlating with the extinguished factors of modernism. Exposing the understanding of the historicity of the postmodern aesthetic condition, in an objective way. Introducing new concepts for the current church, opening the way for a new posture in the pastoral, social, ecclesiological theological scene. Whereas the church is rather the place of people in this postmodern society. At the end follow the references used. So that no work is complete and final on the subject. Having as intentionality the construction of this article is a contribution to the academic environment, in relation to the thematic approach.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Church, Current Society.

1. Introduction

Postmodernism is not the sequence of modernism, but it is a line of thought and conjecture that has been operanded with modernism in parallel. This social analysis of the world has been developed through the observation of the transformations that are happening. This cultural displacement is equal to the innovations that modernity structured in relation to the Middle Ages. It is very difficult to make the descriptions and evaluations of this period of crossing in which it is happening, along with the uncertainties that the attributes of a new and emerging period bring with them.

Contemporary culture is strongly marked by these signs of not far-between changes that are moving forward. Stanley Grenz¹ reports that the *term post-modern* possibly would have been formatted and first

employed in the 30s of the twentieth century to mention an important historical transition that was already maturing and also as a designation for certain developments in the arts and architecture.

However, until the 1970s, postmodernism did not have widespread attention, as a priori only denoted a new style in architecture, however, over time it invaded academic environments, classifying theories exposed in the departments of philosophy of universities, and eventually became of public use to designate a broader cultural phenomenon. Regardless of the meanings that arise from the term postmodernism, its real meaning is linked to displacement beyond modernism. This term implies the rejection of the modern intellectual attitude, even if it was launched in the context of modernity.² According to Grenz “therefore, to understand postmodern thinking, one must see it in the context of the modern world, which has given birth, to which he opposes.”

1. Stanley J. Grenz he holds a PhD in Theology from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, Germany. He was professor of Theology and Ethics at Carey Theological College, in Vancouver, Canada. In addition to a renowned academic and prolific writer, Grenz he was also a pastor.

2. Grenz, Stanley J. Pós-Modernismo. São Paulo : Vida Nova 1997. p.17.

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The evangelical movement also has a great emphasis on the postmodern approach because some aspects are very similar, such as: the great value that is attributed to experience, its own mode of academicism, consensus. However, the church that is totally smothered in this reality of society has lived this transactional moment from modernity to postmodernity. Being challenged by the new generation that emerged in its midst, which is formed and influenced by this tendency of thought, having it the aureous example of the cinematic realities that inspires it, instigating the church and its mission to contextualize itself before the new generation. The confrontation with this new state of things cannot be a suggestion for the church of the evangelical movement to become the defender of modernism simply by the desire for things to be as they were before, but to present a contextualized gospel under the influence of postmodernity, so that this is an incentive to launch the task of understanding the implications without leaving the vehement biblical principles and values aside, but fulfilling the purpose of reaching out to the people who are situated in this new context, expressing God's plan for the world, with faith understandable to this new generation and the message of the Cross of Jesus The Christ as a symbol of this new state of thinking and being.

2. The Spirit of Postmodernity

This subject is somewhat difficult and requires greater attention about it, because it is a theme that involves sociology and philosophy a lot, being a good stimulus to present it from the perspective of Public Theology³ of pastoral exercise. It is important to understand the world in which we are inserted and to think of our faith and witness as a Christian within this reality, the post-modernity that is the challenge of our day.

Within the concepts researched a very valid argument is that postmodernism is the movement of culture that rejects the values of modernity and sees with suspicion the supposedly universal rational principles developed at the time of enlightenment. Demonstrating that

“Postmodernity erupts in our world in the face of the emptiness that modernity is leaving, because its fundamental assumptions have gone into crisis. Modern dreams of establishing social peace and improving living conditions through

science, technology and progress have dissolved like air bubbles. The 20th century was a witness to the greatest human carnage that has been reported. Humanity is complicit in contamination in the water, on earth and in the air of our planet, and also of the distance between those who starve and those who live asphyxiated by opulence. Of all this, science and technology are the greatest allies.” (MARTINS, 2002, p. 36)

Faced with the new changes of this phenomenon, modernism loses the essence of being due to the aggressive behavior of the man who has completely changed his way of life, which becomes emphatically consumerist. It makes unachievable the primary idea of modern design for the simple reason that today one cannot trust man, it is the decay of what we can call ‘the culture of the word employed’, there is no more value and seriousness in what is spoken. Having a name means status and no more character. This new line of looking at present reality is closely related to a intellectual attitude and with a series of cultural expressions that place in having the bases that centralized the modern way of thinking, being postmodernity in turn the reference of this current emerging moment that we are living, in a full way modeling our society more and more. It is notoriously observed the predominance of ideas, attitudes, and postmodern values, forming culture, being able to affirm that “it is the era of postmodern society”⁴.

For a complete observation of postmodernism it is important to identify the thinkers who break through criticism modern thought, names such as Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Lipovestsky, Michel Leiris, Bernard Henri Lévy among others, who stand out as new French philosophers derived from Marxism and are characterized by their critique of modern culture. Manifesting the common intellectual discontent, due to modernity have converted culture into simple utilitarianism. Within a sociological context of conflicting urban life, with an imperialism of the puny capitalism that provokes in people frustration and inner emptiness. Building a new vision of the particular, based on concepts that arise from momentary and everyday events, predominantly preferring the values of what is relative. These thinkers escape from the references used to observe the universal and deny the modern notions of the progress of history, pointing to the mean-

3. A term from the USA, from the 1970s on, the definition given by Dr. David Tracy in a speech given (1981) is: Public Theology means the ‘intertwining of academic studies of religion with the practice of the church in society’.

4. Grenz, Stanley J. Pós-Modernismo. São Paulo : Vida Nova 1997. p. 31.

ing of other cultures present in the world breaking with the prevailing and dominant European culture.

Postmodernism indicates a path to a new cultural age, which has a total and radically broken consciousness with the assumptions that precede it, due to all the negativist baggage that has been placed in the characterization of postmodern society, consolidating an abandonment of beliefs, a lack of faith in progress, demonstrating a terrible corrosive and

“for the first time in recent history, the emerging generation does not share their parents’ conviction that the world is becoming a better place to live. From the ever-growing holes in the ozone layer to violence among teenagers, this generation watches our problems grow unceasingly. They are no longer convinced that human ingenuity will be able to solve these conflicts so great or that their standard of living will be higher than that of their parents... The postmodern generation is also convinced that life on Earth is fragile.” (GRENZ, 1997. p. 32.)

Clearly the spirit of postmodernity is disbelief and opposition to seeing the truth as it was constituted on the basis of modernism through rationality and logical argumentation, now the truth is intrinsic to the nonrational means of knowledge, offering emotions and intuitions a privileged status. The centrality of the individual becomes the need to be complete with everything one can have, and no longer centralizes the understanding of one, modifying the convictions of community, expressing the value that the community is validated through the well-being of the contrary there is no interactivity. However, postmodernism tends to value diversity and respect the place and the particular more than the universal.

3. Architecture As Landmark

It is unanimous among thinkers who study about postmodernism mention about architecture and its influence within this trend. Stanley Grenz (1997) mentions that both the term and the decisive event⁵ of the birth of postmodernity came from architecture, as well as in culture until 1970, modernism prevailed, from then on, a new stream of architects emerges who develop what came to become known as the Interna-

5. Second Grenaz (1997. p.29): it was the implosion of a housing building that was ready, after having been depreed by the residents, by the simple fact of people see the need for renewal, this happened in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, on June 15, 1972 at 3:32 p.m.

tional Style. It is the expression of a broader spirit, this architectural movement was guided by faith in human rationality and by the hope of the construction of human utopia. Organizing an organic architectural identity, generating a concept that a building should be ‘large’ and no longer ‘small’. Each project must express a unique and essential meaning.

The blossoming of the so-called postmodern architecture comes in response to the conceptions of modern architecture, the full rejection of the modern geometric model with the escape of the absolutist mentality of the universal pattern of square glass and steel structures. The planning stems from the predominance of a theme in construction, to get out of the repetition too much, in search of the approximation of geometric perfection, even evidencing a certain spirituality. Moreover, while modernist architects sought to demonstrate an absolute break with the past by rigorously purging from their designs all the reminiscences of earlier times, postmodernist architects recovered historical styles and techniques.

Behind the postmodern rejection of modern architecture is a deeper principle. The postmodernists claim that all architecture is inherently symbolic all buildings, including those of modern structure, speak a type of language. In their search for simple functionality, many architects have tried to banish this dimension. However, after the modern scalpel had cut everything that did not conform to the principle of utility, the postmodernists declared, all that was left was the technique of construction. The artistic dimension that allows a structure to represent an imaginary world or to transmit a history has been eliminated. Postmoderns complain that none of the architectural wonders of the past, such as the great cathedrals, which point to another realm, could have been built during the reign of modernism.

Through artifices such as the addition of ornamentation, the postmodern are trying to restore what they call the “fictitious” element of architecture. Your goal is to rescue the discipline of captivity of pure utility and return to it its role by creating inventive places.

However, the postmodern critique of modernist architecture goes even further. Postmodernism challenges modernist claims to universalism and its claims of ‘transhistorical’ value. The postmodernists argue that, contrary to the modernists’ statements, their architectural achievements were not so much an expression of reason or logic as they were of the articulation of a language of power. Modern buildings derive their language from the industrial forms and materials

of the modern era and from the industrial system to which they served. These forms and these materials give expression to the brave new world of science and technology.

Postmoderns want to abandon this language of power of which modern architects seem to have no consciousness. They want to move away from what they consider a dehumanizing uniformity of an architecture that speaks the language of standardized mass production. In its place, postmodern scans seek to explore new hybrid languages that incorporate postmodern concepts of diversity.

4. The Emblem of Deconstruction

Within postmodernity much draws attention to the prism of deconstructivism, which is difficult to assimilate, because it is not a method, a technique, a style of literary criticism, not even a procedure for the interpretation of the whole. But the understanding of deconstructivism comes from the assimilation that totally new assumptions can be used, which apparently has no connection and have not yet been associated with the observed object, adding the new value to it from the conclusions reached. As Stanley Grenz presents in his work ⁶ that the philosopher Derrida applies deconstruction in this format in philosophy and philology, made icon and influencing thinkers. This concept of deconstructivism has become increasingly eminent in the mentality of people, according to Maroun and Vieira⁷ (2008) we inhabit a world where there is a massive and random bombardment of information that does not constitute itself as a whole that becomes the basis for deconstruction. Reality is fragmented into flaps, composed of partial experiences focused on the emotional.

There is no longer a real belief in God since it can be deconstructed. This aspect emphasizes that postmodern society is characterized by open and plural devices, hedonistic and personalized individualisms. The postmodern environment is populated by cybernetics, industrial robotics, molecular biology, nuclear medicine, in a world translated by images and signs, whose speed is its most striking feature. The speed with which the advancement of science was established designed a new contemporary cartography commanded by transience and ephemerality.

This deconstruction generates an exchange of values,

6. Grenz, Stanley J. *Pós-Modernismo*. São Paulo: Vida Nova 1997. p. 217-220

7. Authors of the article 'Corpo uma mercadoria na pós-moderna' for Psychology in Revista.

which denotes a list of modern concepts that have changed entirely in the postmodern context. For example, the firmness of the human faith of modernity evaporated, uncertainty characterized postmodern disbelief, the power of the absolute is diminished by the great space of the relative, interest is no longer objectivity but subjectivity. The modern standards that are exchanged and fully accepted due to the reason change to emotion, ethics is replaced by aesthetics, extracting guilt from consciousness. The deconstruction of postmodernism wishes to live its own realization exclusively in the present, forgetting values of the past and future. The superfluous is not distinguished from the necessary, one lives the empire of the ephemeral and in the logic of fashion that is the cornerstone of consumption and seduction by attachment.

The modern formal composure that emanated from the acceptance of some absolute moral principles dissociates itself from morality by human actions, the important thing today is to be happy, living seriously in the world of informality.

Intolerance is replaced by passive tolerance. Seriousness gives way to humor that is used as therapy against deception, triumphing to ridicule everyday reality, abandoning the solid beliefs of the past and trivializing the real through the mask of humor. If work, effort, and laboriousness were fundamental virtues in modernity, in postmodernity the culture of effort is replaced by the culture of pleasure, knowledge is sought through pleasure, taking care only of what satisfies.

The disenchantment of reason and the fragmentation of all beliefs have produced disinterest and distrust with what once offered security, language is "I don't care"⁸. Through the world genocide of the twentieth century, which was accompanied by the rapidly developed media, idealistic projects change to a full realism, through this, the non-conformity in the face of injustices that had been the engine of the mobilization of almost all generations, but in postmodernity conformism is the attitude that prevails when one accepts the impossibility of changing reality.

The whole of this deconstruction denotes how much in recent decades postmodernism has become a challenging concept to deal with, and has become a field

8. In March 2003, singer Larissa Meira (Luka) released a single titled "Tô nem aí" – translating to English: I don't care about anything! –, which becomes one of the most listened to songs, even receiving an award in television program as best song of the year.

of conflicting political opinions and forces that can no longer be ignored. All these aspects go through a profound change in the structures of human feeling.

5. The Postmodern Aesthetic Condition

Aesthetic and cultural practices are susceptible to the changing experience of space and time precisely because they involve the construction of special representations and artifacts from the flow of human experience. They always serve as intermediaries for being and becoming, within the conceptualization of the porpostby postmodernity. It is even possible to write the historical geography of the experience of space and time in social life, as well as to understand the transformations that both have been going on, having as reference social and material conditions. The dimensions of space and time have been subject to persistent pressure from the circulation and accumulation of capital, culminating in disconcerting and destructive outbreaks of time-space understanding.⁹

These aesthetic responses to the conditions of compression of time-space are important, and so have been since the separation, which occurred in the eighteenth century, between scientific knowledge and moral judgment, which created for them a distinctive role. The confidence of an epoch can be validated by the breadth of the gap between scientific reasoning and moral reason. In times of confusion and uncertainty, the turn to the aesthetics of any species becomes more pronounced.

As time-space compression phases are disruptive, we can expect that the turn to aesthetics and the strength of culture, both as explanations and as active struggle, is particularly acute at these moments. Being typical of overaccumulation crises catalyze the search for time and special solutions that create, in turn, an overwhelming sense of compression of time-space, we can also expect that overaccumulation crises are followed by strong aesthetic movement.

As Dr. David Harvey puts it

The overaccumulation crisis that began in the late 1960s, which peaked in 1973, generated this result. The experience of time and space was transformed, trust in the association between scientific and moral judgments collapsed, aesthetics triumphed over ethics as a primary focus of intellectual and social concern, images dominated narratives, illness and fragmentation took precedence over eternal truths and unified politics and explanations left the scope of material

9. HARVEY, D. *Condição Pós-Moderna*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola Jesuíta, 2011. p. 293.

and political-economic foundations and passed to the consideration of political and cultural practices autonomous. (HARVEY, 2011. p. 293)

The historical scope suggests, however, that the changes of this species are not at all new, and that its most recent version is certainly within reach of materialistic-historical research. In the background of this catch, it is said that postmodernism can also be considered as a historical-geographical condition of a certain species. But what kind of condition is this and how should we understand it ecclesiastically? Is it pathological or the omen of a revolution of human events deeper and even wider than ever before? Faced with these questions, some concepts that make up the proposal of postmodernism for the ecclesiological ministerial environment will be analyzed.

6. New Concepts for the Church

The postmodern world has ceased to value reason and began to value non-rational elements, such a factor that is constructed from the sociological change that has established in the new urban culture, where people who attend our churches live. According to Luiz Saião¹⁰, who presented the theme “The Church in Postmodernity”, at the Theological Conference Battling for Faith, held in Fortaleza in 2008¹¹, some aspects will be expressed from what is found within this new reality.

First, the aspect of “*reevaluating tradition*” is placed because it has certain things that are accomplished that is biblically correct and there is nothing to discuss and there are other things that are carried out simply by custom, when it is noted that some practices no longer make sense, every church, Christian environment, needs to adjust and adapt according to the new times as long as it is not hurting the biblical principles. This offers from the conception that “nothing changes if nothing changes”, because due to the importance of proclaiming the gospel today it is necessary to make some adjustments in place to have a more efficient work.

Secondarily, the result that “*postmodernity is only a trend of culture*” and this trend is a challenge that requires action, creativity, and correct attitude of the Christian church to make a difference in today’s

10. Luiz Alberto Teixeira Sayão is bachelor’s degree in linguistics and Hebrew and master’s degree in Hebrew from USP. Professor of the biblical and Hebrew area of the Servant of Christ Seminary in St. Paul and the FTBSP, editor and author of the notes of several biblical works and coordinator of the translation project of the Almeida Século 21 version.

11. Find in references to Conference Theological cited.

world.

The conceptualization of “*pluralism and diversity*”, within the postmodern reality are elements of great importance, because there is a great diversity in the current scenario, which is the hybridism factor within society. Then we need a pluralization of the forms we worship, a differentiated liturgy. Due to diversity, language shaped by the context of the postmodern mentality is required to reach people. However, these elements necessarily need to be mapped and fully understood in order to be able to integrate people’s reality and achieve them effectively.

The collision of diversity conjectures a clearer doctrinal definition, corresponding to the contradiction that there is in terms of belief and life for those who have the mind constituted on the postmodern basis of thinking, without this extreme clarity people did not understand the true proposal of the gospel. Today there are a large number of people involved in the gospel, but without a definite awareness of Christian behavior and life.

The aspect of “*facing relativism*” within postmodernism is the expression of no longer having value what is rational, because people do not want to understand, but rather feel something to be satisfied, however the principles of God that are in the Bible are non-negotiable, thus stimulating the confrontation of this relativism from the rescue of the scriptures, being the problem of this lack of biblical extradition in a pure way. For the Holy Scriptures need to be taken up to make a difference in people’s lives. Relativism is constituted in this postmodern generation, making it difficult to assimilate what is necessary and what is secondary. Thus pure biblical extradition plays the fundamental role in presenting what is really necessary. Relativism has discipleship as an agent of transformation because it works to be able to guide and teach what is fundamental to what is secondary.

The aspect of “*information in current culture*” totally disstructures the concepts of churches that are historical or that do not yet process in their midst the concepts of postmodernity and are stuck to modern time, due to the factor that postmodernity has shown to all that the world is not made only of rational perspectives, but if it has several other elements that interact in this process. Thus, cognitive communication no longer has value for the postmodern context and overvaluing the surrounding communication. For there is a conception of it: it has to get the world upside down, due to already being upside down.

“*The predominant postmodern culture is existential*”, appeals to the emotional, to the meaning of a non-rational life, generating a new teaching method that, in order to have relevance, must be connected with the reality of the listener, thus making as a relevant point of this existential predominance the reach of the individual in his need, in his specific situation.

“*Discover the value of art*”, this aspect demonstrates that today art is the main way of communicating content, because at the present time ideology is developed from the media and popular art. The current church has had the problem of lack of harmony with the contemporary world having little capacity to express the elements of faith and important elements of the gospel through artistic means, it is of great value that the communication of these elements to impact the world happen. It is necessary to understand that it is necessary to give greater attention to the media of the current culture, because popular art will be the means of teaching in the future, especially with the artistic and engaging language of the sport.

“*The contemporary world and the search for the sensory*”, in postmodernity people go to meetings to have a deep experience with God, thus employing an engaging worship. The church needs to work for the person to open up to receive the message, and this is a necessity in the face of this postmodern reality.

“*The rational and the cognitive are not absolute*”, from the point of view of the ecclesiological structure requires an escape from the historical fundamentalist concepts, thus adding the value of the small groups so that there is the adequacy and space of the display of the ideas of each person, facilitating the discussion and conversation of the referred subjects. The valorization of the laity through the potential that one has in communion and evangelism without inhibition by the lack of rationality because the world is not made only of reason as well discovered in postmodernity.

After all the necessary explanations on the subject, the final considerations will be given below for the completion of this academic effort.

7. Final Considerations

In the theological environment that is linked to this postmodern reality, we need to understand some changes. Due to the reformed tradition that arose based on Luther’s perspective, and stated: only the Bible, only grace, only faith, flourishes within modernity from the sixteenth century in Europe. Becoming the Protestant tradition par excellence, without delay

happened a counter position called Arminian tradition, because the reformed greatly value the sovereignty of God and the Arminians value human responsibility.

At the end of the 19th century, the liberal tradition begins, which remakes the reading of the Bible with a totally rational view, rejecting what is supernatural, having this tradition a strong impact on European and American society. This liberal tradition generated a strong reaction mainly in the southern United States, from which the fundamentalist tradition emerges. With the arrival of the twentieth century, after all these transformations bursts the charismatic tradition that is the Pentecostal tradition, which leads to understand that from the change of scenery from modernity to postmodernity, firms this new tradition by the factor of it being the religious reflection of postmodernity. Before we tried to explain everything for reason, in the Pentecostal context of the twentieth century the emotion and spiritual experiences are also accepted as an explanation, making a reality very strong. In the sociological and philosophical sense, the charismatic tradition represents this reality of the postmodern world. With this growth of postmodernism the reality today that the church has is the pinnacle of this trend.

The Brazil of the evangelical movement in the twentieth century is totally modern due to its progenitor influence, thus helping a lot in progress. Postmodernity becomes part of this scenario from some relevant and important events that affect everyone; as: neo Pentecostalism, which is established by the distance that the churches take from their origins of colonial evangelization, with the strong appreciation of empiricism and lay ministry, having emerged from the middle of this century groups of so-called divine healing, names such as: Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular, Igreja Nova Vida, Igreja Maranata¹²; and totally Brazilian churches such as: Deus É Amor, O Brasil Para Cristo, stirring with traditional historical churches that begin to have several ramifications at this given time. Then, within this context already at the end of the 70's, groups with peculiar characteristics emerged that strengthen neo Pentecostalism in fact, churches such as: IURD, Internacional da Graça, Renascer em Cristo, which present the triumphalist message, marked by the theology of prosperity, theological simplification by the idea that all evil comes from the devil, focused on the search for extraordinary experiences with a different hermeneutics, of positivist confession of faith. In this triumphalist vision the obsession is

12. In this paragraph, the proper names in Portuguese of the Churches will be respected because it is the reality of Brazilian Churches.

for victory, with spiritual battle, of the clientalism relationship between church and faithful, with extreme use of the media.

From what is perceived to happen in the postmodern world as a whole we find today some wounds, why it is notorious so many broken marriages, unstructured families, confusion, people without father, without a mother, a real chaos in the world and in the family structure, very disturbed, anxious, neurotic, confused, boring, with low self-esteem, sexual problems, traumas, where the church needs to understand that it is a hospital, working and giving special attention to these wounds. For it is a reality of our day that needs to be evaluated and considered so that God with his grace will make a difference in this context.

In the face of what Jesus says in the gospel of Mark 2:17: "It is not those who have health who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call righteous, but sinners", we need to be aware of the Christian vocation which consists of evaluating all the new characteristic spirits that shape the culture to which God calls believers to live as his people. One of the objectives of this task is to equip the church so that it clearly expresses the gospel and emanation in the cultural context. Today, the challenge is to live in accordance with Christian commitment in the midst of a culture of relativism and to proclaim the gospel to a generation that, at every moment, is postmodern in its way of thinking.

It is expected that this article has made it clear that: 1) the understanding of where it emerges and where postmodernity is directing the social context; 2) what was in architecture, that the characteristic landmark of the turn of modernity to postmodernity happened; 3) that postmodernity places an insignia in modernity, proposing the forgetting of its propositions; 4) that aestheticism is a high value for postmodernity; 5) that the church has full conditions and must assume its role in this new social framework. In view of what was presented in this article, I conclude the general technical considerations about the postmodern world from the pastoral perspective.

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