

# Living in a Brave New World

## L'Abri conference

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# 1 God's Unchanging Truth in a Brave New World - Jerram Barrs

God has called us to be his ambassadors in this world. How will we, in our brokenness and flawed natures, begin to fulfill such a calling? The answer, though not easy, is that we fulfill this calling through humility. Humility is at the very heart of growing to know God better, and taking his word into this world as his representatives.

Read John 9. There is an account of Jesus giving sight to a blind man, and the religious leaders struggle to come to terms with this. They questioned the man several times. "As long as you say you see, your guilt remains," Jesus said, "you must acknowledge your blindness to see."

The Lord wants us to grow, not to stagnate or drift along, but to grow from glory to glory into the likeness of Jesus Christ. We must humble ourselves in order that this may begin to happen. If you are not yet a believer in Jesus Christ, open your mind, be prepared to think new thoughts these next few days, to open your heart to grasp Jesus. For those believers, open your minds, ask questions, be prepared to be stretched. You'll be in front of a fire hose these next few days: open your mouth. "Humble yourself under the might hand of God, and he will exalt you."

"Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and destroy every obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God." Paul here calls us to see the ideas and life-patterns of the world in which we live, to see clearly those tensions and conflicts between our changing culture and the unchanging word of God. However, seeing what is wrong isn't the only thing Paul calls us to do. We have to be prepared to learn from the people around us, both fellow Christians and non-Christians.

Jerram's father was a committed communist, a passionate Marxist, and yet his marriage was one of the best marriages he's ever seen. Never once in his life did he hear his father say an unkind, disrespectful, discourteous word to his mother. Every day as he thinks about marriage, the best model he has is his own parents, who were not Christian believers. We have to have a humble attitude before the non-believers around us.

Scripture also says that God gives his wisdom to the whole human race. Proverbs 8 makes this very clear. Revelation says that all the nations will bring the glory of their cultures and kingdoms, so we can learn from every culture in every generation. What are the strengths and glories of any given

culture? How does it show us truths from God's word which we may have missed, being blinded by our own culture? As well as humble stance before God's word, we must take a humble stance before human cultures, to see the light they can shed on God's word.

## 1.1 Pre-modern culture

Strengths of the pre-modern culture:

1. Truth comes from above. There was a recognition of the transcendent truth. Moral wisdom comes from above. Plato expressed this more powerfully than any other pre-modern who sought to understand the world without the world of God. He said that human life tries to conform to the moral righteousness of god.
2. There is a profound respect for previous generations. This truth is one that our generation needs to hear: we are taught that truth all occurs today.
3. There is a deep sense of human community and the connectedness of relationships.

Weakness of pre-modern culture:

1. A loss of the knowledge of God. God is beyond our understanding and cannot be known.
2. A loss of valuing the body. This is most clearly seen in eastern thought (Hindu), but also in the Greek view that the body was a prison-house of clay for the spirit, and they had an absolute rejection of the immortality of the body. Paul's preaching the bodily resurrection in Acts 17 would have shocked many of those present. Our church today are still living with the damaging consequences of the devaluing of the body.

What glories of God's Word ought Christian emphasize in response to pre-modern cultures?

3. Glory: the personal nature of God. God has made himself known through Jesus, his incarnate Son. He delights to make himself known. The essence of Christianity is that the eternal infinite God has made himself known to us in word in Scripture and through the person of his

Son. God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all; He is holy and good, He is personal.

4. Glory: his delight in making himself known.
5. Glory: the clarity of his revelation of himself in Jesus Christ.
6. Glory: the beauty of the body and the physical world. God has made this, and he delights in it. Four doctrines:
  - (a) Creation: it was created “good”. Paul tells Timothy that demons deny the goodness of physical creation.
  - (b) Incarnation: that the eternal God became flesh, and dwelt among men, and we beheld his glory. This idea is intolerable to the Greeks and absurd to the Hindu.
  - (c) The resurrection: that the Son of God was raised in his body, and is eternally human and God. Christ has a physical body forever.
  - (d) The consummation: we will be raised up with immortal bodies and will dwell forever in the new earth.

## 1.2 Modern culture

Strengths of modern culture:

1. Strength: Reason. We are rational creatures made to reflect on our lives. We are not to accept things just because they are handed down, but we may question and reflect. This has brought much help and understanding and good things into our lives. Reason is a wonderful gift of God.
2. Scientific enterprise and technology are based on reason. Science has brought incredible benefits into our lives.
3. Human beings can bring about significant change. This confident mind-set has brought obvious benefits into our lives all around the world. Its folly for Christians to deny the the modern has brought great benefits into our lives.

Weaknesses of the modern:

1. Confidence in human reason. When reason is enthroned, it leads to idolatry of the mind and refusal to admit that God can speak or exist.
2. Belief in the dignity of human persons lead to idolatry of the individual. This began in the writings of the deists, when they spoke of the pursuit of personal happiness. This encourages dreadful self-centeredness in our lives and communities.
3. Weakness: completely inadequate view of human evil and the capabilities of the human heart. This opens the door for a floodgate of evil, on a personal and social level.
4. Idolatry of science and technology, with a commitment to social engineering and technology with no boundaries. Today in the West we have embarked on a path that shows incredible disregard for the value of human life.

Glories of God's Word for modern culture:

1. God's word gives us a sure foundation for upholding human dignity without idolizing the individual. Our glory is under God in reflecting and submitting to him.
2. We have a sure foundation in the Word for understanding human shame and the evil in our hearts. "What the world expects of Christians is that when they see evil they will name it with absolute clarity and passion—to see the evil in our hearts, name it, and resist it." God calls us to see the sure Word he's given as a Word of freedom. The law of God is liberating in its beauty for our lives. We, too, are shaped with the modern emphasis to think that we are wise enough to know what to do with our lives: we must delight in the law as more precious than pure gold, rather than delighting in personal happiness.

### 1.3 Postmodern culture

**Postmodern.** There has been a sharp reaction against the modern, whether it dates from Niezche, the demolition of the Pruitt towers in St. Louis, or some other date.

Strengths of postmodernism:

1. Knowledge is personal and communal. We are all shaped by many influences, and thinking clearly is extraordinarily difficult. This is wisdom, to recognize this difficult nature of knowing.
2. Delight in the contributions of many different cultures. We must hear the beautiful, wise, and true from all cultures.
3. Challenges the groundless optimism of modernism.
4. Recognizes the scientific model can turn us into objects.
5. Recognizes that humans have a need for the transcendent, the beautiful, not just the rational.

Weaknesses of postmodernism:

1. Objective truth is lost; we are left floundering in a sea of relativity.
2. Moral accountability is lost; we are left with no boundaries.
3. Loss of home: we are adrift on a sea of scepticism and cynicism.
4. Rejection of all authority. This leads to ever greater social breakdown.

Glories of the unchanging truth of God's word:

1. Truth can be known, because God has made himself known to us in such a way that we can understand him and the world in which we live.
2. There is moral certainty. God has made himself known and his character, so we have a moral direction instead of our culture's confusion.
3. There is hope, because God has acted in history, supremely through his Son, Jesus. There is a deep hope, we grieve in the face of tragedy, but not as those without hope, because of the resurrection of the dead.

Both modern and postmodern culture undermine true community. Christians are called to follow the Lamb where ever He leads. We must follow Jesus and live for other people, thinking of what will fulfill others, by following the Lamb in loving, serving, and laying down our lives for others.

## 2 Common Grace: God's Commitment to Care for all Creation - Jerram Barrs

[insert two page notes sheet: "Common Grace"] John Calvin is the theologian of Common Grace (CG), so many quotes from him.

### 2.1 lecture

At the heart of CG is God's covenant. First, we see God's covenant with the entire human race after the flood in Gen. 9, with his promise to uphold the seasons and never totally flood the earth again, and the rainbow is the sign of this covenant. One of the most striking things about this covenant is that God makes it without regard to the response of the human race: it is based upon his unchanging word.

What does CG mean?

1. God has committed himself to care for all of creation. Ps. 145 begins speaking of God's kingship over the whole world and all its creatures, and his commitment to have compassion on all his creatures. "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time."
2. God has an even deeper care for us as human persons. In Matt. 6, Jesus speaks of God's care for all creatures: the birds, the lilies of the field. Yet later Jesus tells us we are worth more than the sparrows or the flowers. Psalm 8 celebrates this.
3. God is committed to serving and caring for even his enemies. Jesus challenged us in Matt. 5 ("Love your enemies") to imitate the Father in caring for our enemies. Is it right to help an unmarried couple move into their house? God "enables" them to keep living, whether they love him or shake their fists at him. God cares for his enemies, and so should we.
4. The original creation of life and the ongoing providential care for the universe are part of the work of Christ, our Redeemer. Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:2,3. Christ not only saves us but upholds this world.
5. Because of God's commitment and continued upholding of the world, one consequence of this is that the world continues to display his divine nature. God's judgment on the human race does not obscure his

revelation of himself. Psalm 19. Everything displays something of the beauty and glory of God, despite all the ruin and damage that we bring to this world. We cannot erase the marks of this earth's divine origin and God's constant care for all things. The Holy Spirit cares for this world like a dove brooding over its young.

6. CG makes people even more culpable in their rejection of the truth of God. People are without excuse.
7. Apologetic consequences of CG.
  - (a) We may appeal to the beauty of creation in our appeal and proclamation of the majesty of God (Ps. 8 and 19). Calvin calls creation a 'glorious theater.' (Institutes I, v, 1-2)
  - (b) We may appeal, as Paul does, when talking to pagans, to God's glory as the Creator and to his providential care for all people (Acts 14:15-17).
  - (c) Paul also appeals to God's providential rule over history and his upholding of human life and his nearness to all people. Think of Babel, and God putting down kings and raising others: Nebuchadnezzar, the downfall of the Soviet government, Tienanmen Square and its causing millions of Chinese to ask questions about human life. Today the brutality of radical Islam is causing many Muslims to be open to the Christian faith and to ask questions about Christianity. When Paul addressed the Athenians in Acts 17, he declared that their own thinkers were aware of God's nearness, and he appealed to God's rule over history.
8. CG means that God hasn't abandoned the human race to complete and utter depravity. Humans are not demons; demons *only* lie and destroy. People are still in God's image: there is no one so wicked that the image of God is completely obliterated in their lives.

What are the consequences of the ongoing grace of God in people's lives?

- (a) People still have a sense of divinity. See Calvin Institutes I, iii, 1, and Institutes, I, i, 1-2.

- (b) People still have the law of God written on their hearts (Rom. 1.32-2.15). There are no true moral relativists; everybody is constantly making moral judgments of other people.
- (c) People still love their children and other people, even to the point of self-sacrifice. Luke 6.32,33, 11.11-13, Rom. 5.7).
- (d) People still exercise dominion and sometimes with genuine respect for the natural world. Environmentalists are not necessarily Christian believers. In fact, there is a huge shortage of Christians working in environmentalism. Must we be non-Christians to care for this world? Christians more than anyone ought to understand why this world ought to be cared for.
- (e) People sometimes choose to honor others more highly than themselves, thus imitating the eternal mutual honor within the Trinity.

Calvin speaks of God's image in humanity as a "bright mirror" of God's nature.

9. God constantly gives his wisdom to every nation: Proverbs 8.1-4, 8.15-16. Quite a few of the Proverbs in the OT book of Proverbs come from other nations (i.e. Egypt) and Solomon recognized the wisdom of the nations.

Calvin recognized the wisdom God gave to all people. "If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering blasphemy to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears." (Institutes II, ii, 15) "although some individuals are born without reason, that defect does not impair the general kindness of God, but rather serves to remind us, that whatever we retain ought justly to be ascribed to the Divine indulgence." (Institutes II, ii, 17).

10. The gifts of CG to all people, believers and unbelievers, serve the work of restoring and of setting back the consequences of the Fall.

Implications of this doctrine for Christians:

1. We are called to respect all people and honor them with our recognition of their dignity before God, just as the Lord does. James tells us not to honor them is a blasphemy against God. Dishonoring people is

dishonoring to God. Don't ask "What's wrong with this person?" but "What's right about this person? How does he or she display the image of God? What is right, admirable, praiseworthy, excellent about this person?"

Psalm 8 is in the context of a number of Psalms exploring the depravity and wickedness of man. In that context, it answers that man is made a little less than God, and crowned with glory and honor. We are called to respect people, wherever they are. "How can you with the same mouth praise God and speak poorly of those made in his image?" (James)

2. We are to love all people, even our enemies. Everybody is made of one flesh, we are one race. Institutes III, vii, 6. You all have personal examples where you must apply this. As a believer loved by God without any merit on your part, you are called to love people, even the most obnoxious people, no matter who they are and what they have done.
3. We are to gladly receive the good gifts which come to us from unbelievers: meals, architecture, books, music, social justice, heroism (i.e. the 9/11 firefighters). To assume that Christians are immediately more giving and caring than unbelievers is simply arrogance and a denial of the image of God in others.
4. Acknowledging these good gifts we will see what a huge difference it is going to make to the way we think about human cultures and our affirmation of them. Think of the present confusion among believers about the arts. Think of the cars, buildings, roads, newspapers, radio, etc: most of the things in our lives may be made by non-Christians. You don't stop and ask if the building was made by Christians, you just ask if it's good. You admire a beautifully set table, meal, and room; we benefit from the culture of unbelievers all the time.
5. We happily work alongside unbelievers in most work settings, recognizing that they may have greater integrity in their approach to their jobs than many professed believers in Christ. We have been given the grace of God and the clarity of the Spirit, but we need to be ready to admire the CG unbelievers show in the workplace.

6. We will gladly be co-belligerents with non-Christians in moral, social, and political action.
7. We will see our responsibility for environmental action and concern for the other creatures God created.
8. We need to devote far more time in our worship and praise to the recognition of and the celebration of this marvelous doctrine.

## 2.2 Questions

1. What about Jesus and the Pharisees? or Dietrich Bonnhoffer?

I'm not saying we are not to be discerning.

Concerning Jesus' words to the Pharisees: they were the people most confident that they were serving God faithfully and were zealous for his worship and service. In reading the gospels you see that Jesus is much more gracious, kind, and tender with people whose lives are broken and damaged by sin, and is much more severe with those who are 'most holy' and think that their lives are all held together. We get this all wrong, and we encourage the self-righteous in our hearts. We have to start with the severity of God's word and righteousness to ourselves, and take the log out of our own eyes. Jesus is the friend of sinners. The more messed up their lives, the more dignity and gentle action he takes with them. There is a place for speaking with passion and clarity against self-righteousness: Jesus' hard words are for the heart of the church. The only way to break that arrogance is to challenge it with hard words.

In terms of Dietrich Bonnhoffer (his "Life Together" is an excellent work on Christian community) I assume you're asking about his resistance to Hitler. I am not saying that Christians should not resist evil and uphold righteousness: I am not a pacifist for one second. There are right and appropriate times to overthrow governments and assassinate rulers. Its a wonderful question you ask, and there are two issues involved.

- (a) Am I faithful to what God's word clearly says about this issues?
- (b) When I speak with clarity, do I speak with the grace of Jesus Christ or just with condemnation? Are people present when I

speakers who have engaged in what I speak against? Do they feel welcome to listen or do they only hear a condemning attitude and judgment? If they cannot hear and listen to you speaking the truth with love, then you have betrayed the gospel. We must uphold the holiness and love of God. If we discipline our children, they must be disciplined with love. Bonhoeffer didn't decide to assassinate a ruler with glee, but with deep misgivings and a heavy heart, because he longed for repentance but that hadn't come to Hitler.

- (c) What practical advice would you have for a person in a church forgetting CG?

First of all, living differently in the way you talk with people and relate to people. Sinners felt comfortable in Jesus' presence. Set an example in terms of the people you get to know. Treat them with respect and grace, listen to them. Go to a Hindu temple with a Hindu friend: if you want Hindus to listen to you you must be willing to listen to them. You must show grace in your speech with others. Setting an example isn't always appreciated. Jesus wasn't appreciated by the Pharisees, and he is most criticized for spending time with sinners, but his response was to remind them that mercy, not sacrifice, is what the law called for. Mercy toward people is at the heart of God.

- (d) I work with non-Christians almost exclusively. In defending them before fellow believers, my fellow believers are starting to doubt my own faith. How can I speak to my brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that is not frightening to them? How can I be more clear with other believers?

If one works with non-Christians with honor and respect, other believers can often doubt our own Christianity. This is sadly very common, because many Christians are taught to be afraid of our culture, because it will corrupt and destroy us. Yes, there are many terrible things in our culture, such as the breakdown of sexual morality, dishonest business practices, etc. This is our context. Many Christians are taught to be afraid of this, but to retreat.

Jesus' charge to us was not to be afraid when he sends us into the world (John 17). We do all need Christian fellowship, but we mustn't be stuck in a Christian enclave. We're even told not to

fear the devil. God has numbered the hairs on our head, and we are cared for.

Secondly, we are told to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are lots of dreadful things done in churches—if you find a perfect church, don't join it, because you'll ruin it. In 1 Cor. 13 Paul's words about love are addressed to the church, to a broken, sinful church. Surely there are lots of people hearing these things who will say, "Jerram Barrs is liberal." But he's simply trying to be faithful to the gospel in relating to our culture. J. K. Rowling "The most powerful force in the universe is self-sacrificing love," which she says over and over again in her Harry Potter books. Help them see delight in architecture, clothing, meals, etc.

- (e) Are we taught something different in the OT model of Israel judging the pagan nations and the teaching example of Christ in the calling to lay down our lives for our enemies? What does this mean not only in the personal setting but also in the political realm today?

Certainly it is completely inappropriate to look at OT Israel and equate that with any nation today. Israel was a unique nation bound covenantally to God. Its completely inappropriate to think of our nation as parallel to Israel.

Are there principles of mercy and justice that apply to Christians in every century which apply to both private and public life. The Quakers and other Christian pacifists believed that Christians couldn't be involved in applying justice in the social sphere, so they wouldn't sit on juries, serve as congressmen, police, lawyers, military personnel, etc. Scripture is clear that we must practice mercy and justice at every level.

This is not contrary to the gospel. Jesus did not sacrifice himself on the cross at the expense of justice. C.S. Lewis said that justice and mercy kissed at the cross. The Lamb is also the Lion. We must put into practice both of these aspect of God's character. Its not always easy, but we must wrestle with this at every level: parents, teachers, and all situations in life. If Jerram Barrs were not a pastor he would be a policeman, committed to justice, mercy and love.

### **3 Confronting a World of Designer Babies, Saviour Siblings, and Re-engineered Transhumanists: Towards a Theology of Biotechnology - Dr. Christopher Hook**

[email him and ask for a copy of his PowerPoint presentation.

Aldous Huxley: "Brave New World Revisited" "The prophecies made in 1931 are coming true much sooner than I thought they would."

"Science Finds. Industry Applies. Man Conforms." - motto of the 1933 Chicago Worlds Fair

Scientism - Science holds the supreme level of epistemic and ontological authority. All bodies of knowledge must adopt the methods of hard science to achieve validity.

Technicism - It entails the pretension of human autonomy to control the whole of the earth.

The roots of scientism and technicism go far back. These are similar to positivism. The Enlightenment brought about the ideas that man is able to be perfected and that he is just a machine - the reductionist vision. Darwin's theories have been used to divorce society from theism. Joseph Fletcher worked to establish situational ethics. Peter Singer, chair of philosophy at Princeton, seeks to devalue human beings, saying that the life of a newborn is much less valuable than that of a pig. "Rethinking Life and Death" is a book where he says animals are other persons, but the elderly, the child, the pre-born are not persons.

In the debate over stem cells, words morph as quickly as cells.

Robots - artificial intelligence. Some companies are marketing robots as parts off your family. "Flesh and Machine" (book by MIT Robotist)

Eugenics. Coined by Sir Francis Galton (1820-1911), a cousin of Charles Darwin. "Hereditary Genetics (1866). Galton was concerned with natural selection as a means of cleansing and reducing populations. "War Against the Weak: America's Crusade to Create a Super Race" by Edwin Black, an excellent documentation of how America has and is still advancing eugenics. We as a culture has bit it hook, line, and sinker. Many states have imposed forced sterilization laws, churches have enforced bans on multi-ethnic marriages. "Criminals should be sterilized and the feeble minded should be forbidden to breed..." - Theodore Roosevelt, 1913, then retired president.

“From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice”

James Watson, co-discoverer of DNA, said that he would like to eliminate stupidity.

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis. Embryos are genetically screened before implanting in invitro-fertilization. “PGD should be performed for all IVF embryos.” This leads to the possibility of designer babies. Case of Molly Nash, whose brother’s embryo was genetically selected to have the right genetic material to donate stem cells to save his sister’s life: the boy was the fourth embryo implanted when he was born, and of the 30 embryos they made, only those four were implanted, and the rest of them were destroyed.

We have a culture and churches that are very confused about these genetic issues. Almost three quarters of those surveyed believe that these technologies will result in children being viewed as products.

“We must develop as quickly as possible technologies that make possible a direct connection between brain and computer” - Steven Hawking. Work is in progress to develop special chips to encourage continued growth and survival of neurons in the brain, and to implant these chips into monkey brains. One company, “Human Welfare Organization” is offering biotech to families. Cyberkinetic Corporation is offering paralyzed individuals ability to control wheel chairs through neural interfaces implanted into the brain. Several months ago MIT published a textbook summarizing the state of the art in implanting supplements into the brain. The military is very involved in pursuing these sorts of brain-implant technologies.

Soma. “Christianity without tears- that’s what soma is.” We do have uses of drugs to improve moods, such as Prozac. The Hedonistic Imperative website is an attempt to regulate emotional responses.

“Cosmetic Neurology” Methylphenidate and other stimulants are becoming ever more popular with college students for studying through the night. One Yale student reported taking the drug and reading all of “Crime and Punishment” and writing a 30 page paper all within 30 hours.

Nanotechnology. This is based on a reductionistic understanding of life. Cells are made up of hundreds of thousands of cellular machines. The ribosome takes molecular code and transforms it into proteins: a cellular factory. Researchers are trying to build machines with cellular parts.

Some are trying to take the individual cells and convert them to computer devices. Ed Shapiro, in Israel, estimates that by 2020 we will have programable genetic cells which can be translated into specific products such as artificially produced insulin or chemotherapeutic cells.

Nanomedicine may develop molecular tools, like genes that can be turned on and off by radio frequencies– remote control genes to fight diseases.

The NanoAging institute believes that with nanomedicines as tools to enable people to dramatically enhance lifetimes. Some of these researchers are striving for immortality. Strategies of Engineering Negligible Senescence (Senescence is the idea that there is a limit to the number of times a cell can reproduce).

Centenarian Wish List: to have more vision, to bear better so as not to loose contact with others, to be able to walk, to do more, to not be so forgetful, to be able to attend church, for grown children to be kind to their parents, for physicians to understand the problems of the elderly, etc.

“Fantastic Voyage” by Ray Kurtzweil and Terry Grossman - he is actively pursuing immortality. “The Singularity is Near” by Ray Kurtzweil - believes that we will soon see an advance that allows us to achieve immortality. He thinks that we will soon be able to duplicate a person’s brain in computer form. “The Age of Spiritual Machines” by Kurtzweil. He has the ear of our government, when there are discussions of how the NIH is using biotech funds, he is listened to, so its important that we know of him.

Kurtzweil is a member of the group Transhumanists, [www.betterhumans.com](http://www.betterhumans.com) They believe that humans are just a step in the evolutionary process and that we are able to change to something new and different.

The NBIC (Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Techology, and Cognitive Science) Report - an NSF/NIH project.

Many theologians have embraced the transhumanist ideals. Phil Heffner said, “The technohuman, the cyborg, is more in the image of God.”

Theological tools for reflections

1. to be an image bearer of God is to be begotten by human parents - its not a list of attributes or else God would have defined it in Scripture. It is entirely relationally based, as the theologian Barth has said. Miraslav Volf, “After our Likeness” we are persons because God has called us each by name.
2. Three views of technology: techno-utopianism, techno-skepticism, and techno-
3. Exercise, sleep, vaccinations, healthy diet, and education are not “enhancements” but are part of how God designed us.

4. We have the image we must pursue: the image of Jesus Christ, the incarnation. The Christian ideal and perfection is necessarily Christological. 2 Cor 3.18, Rom. 8.29, Rom. 12.2 We must not accept the world's non-Christ-like image. God must transform us into new persons by transforming our hearts.
5. The Christian and Re-engineering. Do we have freedom to re-engineer ourselves? No, our bodies belong to God (1 Cor 6.19,20). Why did Jesus heal but not enhance? We have no record of anything other than restorative healings. Jesus could have made "enhancements" but He chose not to. Our problem is not our physical or mental limitations, but our broken and corrupt hearts.
6. We must develop tools of practical theology. It is not, are we called to procreate (if a couple can't), but are we called to parent? If we are, there are millions of children waiting to be adopted.
7. Does techology promote human life and value, or diminish? Does it promote self-absorption? Does it promote human flourishing or must we adapt to the technology? Is the technology the master or the servant?

"To stand against the present devaluation of human life, a significant percentage of people with our society must adopt and live by a worldview which not only hopes or intends to give a basis for human dignity, but which really does." - Francis Schaeffer, "Whatever happened to the human race?"

## **4 It'll Change Your Life! Popular Music as Cultural Dialogue - Denis Haack and Travis Scott**

(Haack) Popular music plays a different role today from what it did in the previous generation. Today the technology has shifted so that we can carry music around with us. Often a younger person will give Haack a CD they burned and ask him to listen to it, and when he takes the CD he feels like he has part of their heart. This didn't happen a generation ago.

(Scott) How many of you own an iPod? (quite a few do). We often put together our own playlists, rather than listening through an entire album. About the title of our lecture, “It’ll Change Your Life! Popular Music as Cultural Dialogue”: in the subtext of our culture there is conversation taking place and being shaped by popular culture. In Steven King’s memoir on writing, he describes the summer of 1969, and the way he places it is by the music that was being played and created at that time. Marcita Concol’s new novel (on sale this weekend) begins with an epigraph from Bruce Cockburn. This seminar’s title is from the movie, “Garden State”, from the scene where Zach Braff’s character and Natalie Portman’s character meet, and she says that the Shin’s music will change your life. For 30-somethings and 20-somethings, we don’t just hear or listen to music, but it is a part of our life. There are songs that he listens to now that instantly transport him back to an event, a crisis, a part of his life.

[played **Palm of Your Hand** Cake, *Pressure Chief* 2004]

(audience) What is that song about? How you can know what’s in the future, about things that seem certain not being sure, about a house falling down.

(Scott) Perhaps its about the fragmentation of the family—people say forever and then they leave a gaping hole in the foundation of what was once a marriage and is now torn by divorce. The question about the future reflects the cynical view of marriage in our culture today. Music not only reflects our generation, but it is a validating of the emotions of our generation. His parents divorced when he was one, so he really connected with this song, and realized that others have had his experiences. Non-Christian musicians often capture the pain of life in stronger ways than Christian musicians.

(Haack) One of the saddest things he’s heard from young people is that he is the first person in his generation to take their music seriously. This is a gap, a chasm in the church that we (his generation) needs to bridge, and needs to bridge it quickly. Music is hearts talking to hearts - that’s what mixes are. As he and his wife have met young people they’ve invited them to their home for a meal, and told them to bring their music—whatever they’re listening to that touches their soul deeply. Often the first CD isn’t the real one that they’re touched by, but often by the second or third CD they get to something of their experience. He’s found that they very quickly start talking about the things that matter most, through talking about the music and that leads to the things that matter most. There’s also a sense that something of identity or connectedness is communicated through the music

that people like. His grandfather's generation identified themselves by their denomination and political affiliation: he was a Missouri synod Lutheran and a Democrat. For example, Fish fans have traveled to enormous amounts of concerts, so if he met a Fish fan he would know something about them. He and his wife have traveled 7 hours in the last several years to hear Bruce Cockburn in concert- this says something about them and their identity.

On 9/11 he was in Jackson, MS, to co-teach a course at Bellhaven College, and he ended up having to drive north from MS. He'd bought a copy of Bob Dylan's "Love and Theft" and the second track seemed to prophecy the events of 9/11, but it was really just one of our premier songwriters putting his finger on a deep aspect of our culture. The conversation in our culture is going on, and the question is, "Are we going to be part of the conversation with our culture?" This doesn't mean that we come in and say, "Cake, you're all wrong," but rather, "Cake, you're right. I'm part of the pain."

[played **Devils and Dust** by Bruce Springsteen on *Devils and Dust* 2005]  
(audience) What's the song about? It seems to be a metaphor of America at the crossroads between hope and fear. Addiction. An experience of warfare, which is similar to addiction. Self-deception. Choices, knowing what God is wanting you to do, wanting to be a God-filled soul and yet choosing something else. Fear driving his life, destroying one's goodness and potential. The music industry- doing what you love (touring) destroying the fabric of family and the things you love. God isn't big enough to overcome despair. Connection to Dylan's song "God on our side".

(Haack) Upon hearing this song, I felt transported into the experience of a foot-soldier on patrol, struggling with wanting to be faithful but fearing that he might lose his soul- even in a just war there is still the smell of blood and dust. This song has something of a deeper reality than all the theoretical teaching on just war that we usually hear in churches- this song reminds us that even just wars come at a horrible cost, and that's a good reminder to have.

(Scott) He wants to make sure that no one misses the age difference between himself and Haack. Often in the church there is a lack of respect on both side of the generations, and we need to do this more often. We all need to work on this, no one age group is to blame.

Some biblical rationale for this conversation.

1. The first three chapters of Genesis show that God created us to be creator, to reflect his creativity and the beauty of that creativity. Even

though we have the fall in chapter 3, we never see God revoking that claim. He never says that the world isn't worth his time, but he promises redemption in Gen. 3.15. This is God's world. Whether people are in a personal relationship with him or not, we must respect the things that other image-bearers are creating.

2. Joseph, after being sold into slavery, becomes second to Pharaoh, and he knew the ways of the Egyptians.
3. Daniel and a few friends are brought into the king's house for training in Babylonian culture, and they were found to be ten times more knowledgeable about Babylonian culture than any of the Babylonians. This is sorely lacking in the evangelical church today: we often don't have a clue why people are thinking the way they are today.
4. Acts 17, Paul goes to Athens, the center of Greek philosophy and thought, and he shares the message of the gospel with the Greeks. He doesn't quote the OT, he doesn't quote the Bible at all, but he quotes Greek poets. Its marvelous that God gave us this example: God not only doesn't reject the world, but shows us that there is truth in the world to be learned—its there and we can find these remnants of truth and relate them to the gospel. These things other image bearers create can relate to the reality of the gospel. We will have relevant communication with those around us.

[played **Extraordinary Machine** by Fiona Apple on *Extraordinary Machine* 2005]

(Scott says Apple's album was the best album of 2005: go buy it.)

(audience) What did you hear? She's a flexible girl. She's a strong woman, but too much individualism. It's about people's pain, isolation, and how they survive anyway. Sounds like someone's trying to get her saved without getting to know her. Its about an unknown future. I think because of the mocking in the music she may be conveying the arrogance of her culture; she started out as a young musician, was appeased and coddled, and now with this song makes the statement that she will be who she is. Its about not being too comfortable, but by learning about yourself through uncomfortable situations. Its about nanotechnology.

(Haack) He thinks that this is a brilliant CD. The phrase, "extraordinary machine" is a brilliant way to turn the knife. There is some individualism,

but there's also the reality of how one feels when going through a break-up, as she did before making this album.

(Scott) The music itself communicates. In the first Cake song the music is light and cheery, but the lyric subject matter is dark, so that sets up an extra tension level.

[played **Clark Gable** by The Postal Service on *Give Up* 2003]

(audience) What do you hear? The line that jumped out, "I want so badly to believe that "there is truth, that love is real" And I want life in every word to the extent that it's absurd." This line has an angst tension, but the music is poppy and upbeat, in tension with this angst. We too easily will listen to this and dismiss it as postmodern relativism. There is also a disturbing narcissism and that all relationships are a projection of a false identity. He's trying to fill a hole in himself with a relational nostalgia. He realizes that life can't be everything you want it to be; he's come to grips with this fake reality we're presented with in music. It's a good use of irony, which is something we don't often see in Christian music.

**Aerils** (the band is heavy, aggressive) We included this song as an example of a thoughtful, creative presentation of a new age worldview. This song excites him with the possibility of presenting a Christian worldview in a non-dogmatic way.

**Hurt** is a Johnny Cash remake of a NIN song, which he slightly changed to Christianize it (Haack) and it reverberated through pop culture with the wisdom of an older man in pop culture.

Questions - Haack, you alluded to the difference between music in the 1960s and today. What is the significant difference with music then and now? In the 1960s there was a shallow rock and roll tradition, and there was a much deeper folk tradition. Bob Dylan was handed the leadership of the folk tradition, and when he turned electronic he combined the two streams in a way which changed both forever. The conversation was beginning in the 60s but at that time was mostly concerned with large issues of social justice. Today there is more of a recognition of brokenness and bringing that into rock music. The conversation has been broadened out. I hate that this is being taped - needs to be explained in another seminar - I don't want anyone to quote me on that.

Should Christian artists try to make their message more clear than those songs we listened to today? Also, should the music be more marketable? (Scott) Clarity and creativity aren't mutually exclusive. Usually what's passed as Christian music isn't much more than a gospel tract passed as

music: its not really creative. We appreciate sermons that have depth in them, and we ought to look for this in music as well. We need more Christian musicians dealing with the whole of life, not just salvation. People are looking for authenticity and a lived out faith. Sing a song that shows how your faith affects your marriage or social justice. (questioner) I'm not asking for an altar call in a song, but for more clarity regarding the point of the song. (Haack) This has to do with the nature of art. At a certain point art becomes propaganda, and we can recognize that line. Good art does best when it prompts people to reflect and raise questions. Read what Jesus said to crowds in the NT: he speaks in stories about farmers, widows, rich men, etc. Jesus was willing to let his art go out there and act like a little splinter in the imaginations of the hearers, where it festered and made them uncomfortable, thinking and reflecting on his message.

## **5 A Culture of Commodification, or How Much is for Sale? - Dick Keyes**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Some say that consumerism is the only meta-narrative left in our culture. We are comfortable with many things being for sale: books, food, clothing, houses, electronics. No economic system has been more effective at lifting people out of poverty, bringing more economic equality. We can say critical things about capitalism without having a better system up our sleeve.

What is remarkable is how the logic of the market has spilled over into non-economic spheres of life. There is almost no aspect of life unaffected by market logic. Just about anything can be offered for sale by somebody to somebody. Commodities: babies, fertilized human eggs, wombs to carry eggs, education is seen as commodity, for profit schools, hospitals, prisons, political office (recent presidential elections cost 1.2 billion dollars), emotions for sale on reality TV, money for time trade-off (i.e. day-care, McDonalds doing kids birthday parties), dating services, health care, embryos

### **5.2 What is commodification?**

1. A system of the shrinkage of meaning. Under the feudal system the engine of the economy was tied up in family: you owned the land

your family owned. Under capitalism, money is the lowest common denominator. It has power to reduce all sorts of meanings to their price. All sorts of qualities can be reduced to numerical quantity. It displaces anything with intrinsic or qualitative value. The monetary metric cuts that off and relativizes it, resulting in a shrinkage of all other meanings.

“To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” - Neil Postman.

Think of the battle over ANWAR - the Alaska national wildlife refuge. The economic system calls for oil, but doesn't have within itself any way to calculate the value of biodiversity and the value of endangered species. This battle is fought by people who aren't really speaking to each other.

Commodities don't come from anywhere anymore. We wear clothes no one made, we eat food from no where. Teddy bears are now stacked in huge piles in children's bedrooms; children do not value them, and they're made of non-biodegradable materials, and we don't think about what this does to people in China. Runners in the Teddy bear factories often work in terrible conditions, overworked, underpaid, and exhausted, sometimes dying of exhaustion.

## 2. Consequences of commodification.

- (a) In Boston, buzz agents receive free stuff on condition of telling their friends, but they often don't tell their friends why they're promoting the thing. Won't this develop into a real-life Truman show? What does it do to friendships: we gather to praise consumer products?
- (b) What prepares people to do (morally) good work? In journalism people are either pressured to write what is not necessarily true but will sell, or not to write what is true but could hurt people. Ironically, a newspaper not telling the truth will ultimately fail and become a tabloid.
- (c) “The Purely Pragmatic University” article by Derek Bach. The public is losing confidence in universities and their professors as they become more commercialized. He says pragmatically you need more than pragmatism.

- (d) Religion is not immune. The guy who cowrote “The Art of Happiness” realized that we can’t start with the first noble truth of Buddhism, that life is suffering. Some Christian leaders have wonderful plans, but they think the only challenge is how they will raise the money to do this, rather than asking *who* will do this. They say, “No problem. We’ve got the money, if the staff don’t work out, we’ll hire someone else.” Christian organization staff has simply become a commodity.

### 5.3 The commodification of Christian truth itself.

1. Profanity. The consumer culture has become a whole new epistemology; its a new way of understanding things. You can think of the name of God and his truth being hollowed of their content by its being made a commodity. This profanes the name of God. The Reformation was outraged at the selling of indulgences—the commodification of salvation from the suffering of purgatory.

Advertisements for plastic armor of God sets for kids may be profaning the armor of God. Truths about God have become commoditiles.

[Has Covenant College commodified education too much?]

A guy recorded 24 hours of 77 television stations, spent a year watching and analyzing it, and said that the overall message was **you**.

### 5.4 Consumerism and its drives

1. Consumerism .
2. What drives this? Unlike keeping up with the Joneses, people try to keep up with the glossy super-rich they see on TV. In the postmodern market you don’t find yourself, you invent yourself. What easier way to invent yourself than through clothing.
3. James Twitchel, “Lead us into temptation” says that the problem started with the Protestant Reformation, which removed sacredness from the church, saying there’s no sacredness or holy objects, and then in the Enlightenment God himself was chucked out, and it became a de-created world. Where will we go for meaning? The market has

stepped into the void. We don't buy things, we buy meanings attached to things. Meaning is the commodity, the thing that is sold, not so much the stuff itself. Advertising has more power to generate desire than any other force in human history. The purpose of TV is to provide time to the advertisers, and programs are scheduled interruptions between the ads. He is connecting with the deep religious component in marketing—what we would call idolatry.

## 5.5 The Christian response.

1. How to draw lines. You need a reason to draw lines. E.g. prostitution: you need a reason to draw lines and say that it corrupts human dignity and the meaning of sexuality. If you don't have God, where does this meaning come from? You can't leave God out and have a critique on the basis of corruption, because there are not biological arguments against prostitution.

Economic activity, which is good and necessary for life, must be within a larger moral framework (c.f. Adam Smith).

2. Creation belongs to God. It is not ours, we are stewards during our short stay here. This is very different from saying that the world is ours to exploit. There's something unself-referential about being a creature. There's plenty of room for capitalism to function in God's world, but the monetary metric is not the final word.

A Christian executive for Shell Oil believed God would judge him by how he treated four groups: (1) stock holders, (2) employees, (3) customers, (4) and the natural environment. It wasn't easy to balance, but he felt that he trusted God and held the stake-holders in balance.

3. Trusting God. Money idolatry says that we can live by bread alone, so long as we have enough entertainment and therapy to keep from asking big questions. Jesus doesn't outline austerity as a way of living—he doesn't tell us how many shirts to own. He does, however, tell us to store up treasures in heaven, for our heart will be with our treasure.

In the Bible the eyes are connected with what you want. This ties in with our modern advertising culture, which appeals to the eyes. You cannot serve God and wealth. Don't worry about wealth, your heavenly

Father will care for you more than the sparrows or the lilies of the field. If God has clothed the grass of the field, will he not clothe you? (Matt. 6). We find in Jesus' words an attitude of freedom, frugality, and generosity - your life is not determined by your possessions. The Father lavished elaborate designs on flowers which only last for a few hours (and many of which are never seen by people).

We are called to love each other. We will not unfairly coerce or abandon each other, but will be committed to other people. Commodification has no place for this, but love-commitments will cost you a lot.

Generosity is de-commodification: it takes what could be for sale, and gives it away. We can trust God, be thankful, love our neighbor, and be generous to each other. Thieves must give up stealing, and work with their hands to have enough to give to those in need. Stop stealing, get an honest job to earn some money, and then give it away.

This is a spiritual issue, it has to do with battles in the principalities, powers built into our culture. Any resistance we give to commodification must be corporate, from churches and not just families.

4. A Christian worldview. Think of Balaam, who tried to curse Israel but only blessings came out of his mouth. You can't be paid to do what God doesn't allow you to do. Simon Magus tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts, and Peter was enraged. Paul warned of those deceived in mind and without the truth, imagining that godliness was a means of gain—religion is not just because you will receive practical benefit from it. Part of Jesus' rage against the money-changers in the temple was that you had to buy blessed money to buy the blessed animals. [It was to be a house of prayer for the nations, and they were doing business in the court of the Gentiles—preventing the nations from coming to worship (Mark 11:11-17).] Revelation 18 lists commodities in descending order, and human souls are at the bottom.

Christians are to be the caretakers over the whole earth, and part of that is the flourishing of species; we ought to be concerned about the extinction of species due to consumerism.

God is the provider of meaning, not advertising. He is our source of life, and shepherd. Christians out to de-commodify through generosity.

## 5.6 Questions

What does the word “greed” mean? If we live in a society shaped by greed, we won’t recognize greed when we see it: we’ll just think its normal. We must radically get into the Scriptures to understand this. Its most helpful to study the Bible with people unlike you, with people who are not your age, socio-economic status, etc. Get with people with third-world experience, or other cultures. The IRS has graduated income tax; we need a graduated stewardship where those who make more give a larger portion of what they make.

How would you address someone who says consumerism is a modern, not postmodern problem—that its just a holdover from the Enlightenment mindset? Postmoderns have no defenses against the commercial culture- all the meta-narratives which point elsewhere for meaning.

How does the consumer mentality tie in with the loss of a sense of being human? We are aware of commodification when we are treated as commodities. In a commodified society it becomes more normal to view people only in terms of how they contribute to the bottom line. When this happens to us we feel it as a profound violation of our humanity.

What would you say to someone who acknowledges a lot of the problems of consumerism, and says that the answer would be to be more socialist and egalitarian? They think we wouldn’t be as condition by our system to be greedy. What do you say? Your question is too big to tackle, but there is a huge difference between pre-modern society and the west today. Its utterly naive to think that we can go back to a pre-modern existence. We learned something through the marxist bloc countries in that it looks like that’s not the way to go. Twitschl observes that many people complain that everything is bad, but then they do nothing to change how they live. We need to start by changing how we live our lives.

## 6 Flickers of Meaning: The Way Ahead Depicted in Film - Dennis Haack

Roy Anker, “Catching Light: Looking for God in Movies”, says that the cinema deals with what philosophy and theology used to deal with.

Glimpse: yearning for significance. *Garden State* is about an ark on the edge of an abyss. The film is about his search, and the beginnings of reconciliation with his estranged father.

[viewed ark scene from *Garden State*]

Zack Braff, who wrote the film and played Largeman, wanted to call the film Zack’s Ark, but the studio wouldn’t let him. This suggests that the ark scene is central to the message of the film.

*The Station Agent* asks what its like to be marginalized by a physical deformity, or a dying parent, or a broken marriage relationship. *Million Dollar Baby* asks the question, Is life in this world so richly nuanced that simple answers like “euthenasia is wrong” do not suffice. *Thirteen* deals with the body and images our culture projects. *Crash* shows us the ugliness of racism in our own hearts. *The Constant Gardener* is a thriller set in Africa, raising life and death issues over whether western health care can meet the challenges of health in Africa. *The New World*, made by a student of philosophy under Heidigger, asks can radically different civilizations can meet without clashing? *Hotel Rwanda* Is national self interest a sufficient basis for American foreign policy. *Munich* Is assassination an adequate, moral response to violence? How can the cycle of violence be broken?

Art/film is significant

1. because we are image bearers of our Creator
2. because the image was not erased by the Fall. Lamech fathered Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain: giftedness is not only in the seed of followers of God (Gen 4.19-21). Those who deny the reality of the Creator still show real creativity.
3. Some hold a view that worship and evangelism are the part of life unaffected by the Fall, but in realty and every area (family, business, art, economics, etc.) is broken by the Fall.

“The creation of the Father, devastated by sin, is restored in the death [and resurrection of Jesus]” - Bavinck.

William Romanowski “Eyes Wide Open”

Francis Schaeffer, “Art and the Bible”, said, “The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars.”

*Firefly / Serenity* Humans are engineered to have amazing skills, and some are turned into cruel creatures without conscious.

[viewed scene 1 from *Gattaca* (1997), “the not too distant future”] What we soon learn is that the character we saw is an invalid, not Jerome, but Vincent, cleaning up his genetic traces.

[viewed scene 1 from *Gattaca* (1997), “the natural way”] Showed a scene when Vincent’s brother, Anton, was born by genetic engineering, not natural birth.

Facing our unease.

1. We may feel overwhelmed by the number and complexity of the challenged,
  2. we may be fearful that we’re not up to the task, and
  3. we may be discouraged that so much is at stake.
- 
1. Well, we are not up to the task, we can’t bring in the kingdom,
  2. we can’t organize a plan for all the sweeping change, nor should we try, and
  3. what God has ordained for us is not to achieve the extraordinary, but to be faithful in the ordinary things of our lives.

[viewed *Crash* “The invisible cloak” - which is after a nice evening their car is high-jacked and a hispanic locksmith comes to change their locks, and overhears her complaining about him - and he goes home and gives his daughter his ‘invisible and impenetrable cloak’]

Being intentional about our ordinary.

1. Our ordinary defined by our specific calling and the providential hand of God.
2. What is faithfulness at the point our ordinary intersects with those who do not share our deepest convictions and values?
3. St Paul in pluralistic Athens (Acts 17).

- (a) We're in Babylon/Athens, not Jerusalem
  - (b) Paul listened (Acts 17.23, 28). They never said he misunderstood their culture.
  - (c) Paul engaged (Acts 17.17,22-31).
4. The Lost art of listening. Listening is basic. In Anne Lamott's book, "Traveling Mercies" she mentioned the first Christian with whom she could stay in the room.
  5. Listening is hard because you feel a loss of control. You don't have to agree to acknowledge the other person has a point. Part of listening is resisting the temptation to react emotionally to what you hear.
  6. After listening, Paul engaged the Athenians with three important characteristics:
    - (a) He began with points of agreement.
    - (b) He joined conversations already in progress when he arrived in the city rather than beginning his own. He went to the two places in the city where the things that matter most were being discussed. Where are those places in our world today? Movies (especially for the youngest generation. Book discussion groups, knitting groups in coffee shops. Don't start your own discussion group, join an existing one.
    - (c) What he said was to prompt reflection and continue the conversation, not just emphasize his own apostleship.

[viewed clip from *What the Bleep do we (k)now!?* This explores reality from the findings of quantum mechanics. This is not a film he recommends (it's rather boringly made), but it is significant that it is being discussed in groups around the country, and it is an insight into what many of our friends and coworkers believe. Scene "Concepts of God"]

A few questions to ask regarding this scene.

1. What's being said here?
2. What is attractive to you? Why?
3. What do you agree with? What would you challenge? Why?

4. What difference does it make in you life?
5. I agree there is a danger of making God in our image—how do we know who is doing it?

“A matrix of meaning” b Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. If the matrix of our ordinary lives doesn’t intersect our culture, you should reconsider the pattern of your ordinary life. Faithfulness demands this; we must listen to and winsomely engage the people in our post-christian culture. We can learn to listen, ask questions, find points of agreement, and then point people to the story of Jesus, the greatest story to come down the pike.

“a dark oval stone” by marsena konkle (a novel)

## 6.1 Questions

What about a film like “The Wedding Crashers”? Theoretically, any topic can bring connections to point people to Jesus. We need to know our context, and if your ordinary includes people talking about a film like that, then you might want to see the film.

What tools are available for believers who know their weaknesses and don’t want to watch objectionable content? No one has to walk into a film blind; there are tons of resources (even secular sites) which will list objectionable content. We are warned in the OT not to take fire into our laps—we must take that warning seriously. You can talk to people about movies you haven’t seen by asking a lot of questions. Haack gives thanks to God that he lives in an age with movies- they are one of the most brilliant art forms since creation.

Is there a trend in movies that excites your (such as technology or film-making) and is there a trend in our culture that concerns you? Woah! I’m not a prophet. We are at a point where the cinematic arts are developing at a very quick pace in terms of what they are able to do. I.e. digital versus traditional cinematography. A nice thing about art is being transported into worlds you’re not a part of, see through someone else’s eyes, and yet not have to leave your beliefs and values behind. As far as negative things, the envelope will continue to be pushed because we live in a fallen world. This is a sad commentary on our culture and its standards of maturity.

## 7 20th Century Turning Points in Music: John Cage and Postmodernism - John Hodges

This discussion plans to talk about what modern and postmodern views of the world would do to music. First a brief history of the past 150 years.

Premodern, modern, and postmodern ways of thinking are all present today, but there have been turning points in music.

1. J.S. Bach's death in 1750 is one such turning point. He was a bit of a dinosaur when he died. With the new culture after him you can see the results of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment encouraged people toward rational thinking, with a love of form and a rebirth of Greek and Roman thinking. In music this is seen through a rebirth of form.

The sonata form is a prime example of this: four movements, with a three-part form of exhibition, development, and recapitulation. There were strict rules regarding use of musical key in the sonata form. The order and form of the sonata was what the composers felt was beautiful. This idea of sublimating your passions within a strict order is a very Greek idea.

2. In 1770, Beethoven was born. He's the transitional figure from the classical to the romantic period. In the Romantic period they were interested in dismissing form to get at feeling. He inherited the forms that Haydn and Mozart passed down. However, when it came time to express what Beethoven wanted to express, he would bend the forms to express himself- there was a certain catharsis, and in this he was becoming more Hellenistic. Form and content are both important. Beethoven was also the beginning of the full-blown modern view of how you do music.

Modernism as a mindset says Progress is king. True progressives say that whatever is new is inherently better than what is old. Bach never did anything new, but he absorbed what had gone before him, took it in, understood it, and did it better than anyone else; he understood musical craftsmanship in a way others did not. Beethoven started the progress of breaking the rules.

Schubert, Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner, Mahler (died 1911) all outdid each other in more and more radical departures from both form and harmony, especially in their use of chromaticism. Mahler stretched tonality

to allow almost any pitch to resolve to almost any other pitch. Once you've done that and exhausted tonality, where do you go?

- (a) Nationalism. Bartok, Grieg, Copeland, Sibelius, Ralph Van Williams. This is still accessible, because its still tonal. Hodges argument is that tonality is part of the warp and woof of God's creation, and when you depart from this you lose meaning.
- (b) Polytonality. Prokofiev, Stravinski. This is writing in two different keys at the same time. Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf theme has two keys melodically, and Stravinski did this harmonically. Some say that polytonality is putting off the inevitable.
- (c) Atonality. Schönberg, and his students Anton Webern, Alban Berg. The next step in atonality was serialism, which takes the twelve chromatic pitches in the octave, puts them in order, and then uses that pattern for the piece of music. Serialism is after blanking out the idea of tonality. E.g. *Second string quartet, last movement* by Schönberg, where the singer sings a atonal melody. Cadences in the music provide form, and atonal music doesn't have natural cadences, because it doesn't have tonality. The essence of modern is assuming progress is better.
- (d) 1945 brought the end of World War Two, and the question was where do we go from here? Many Jewish musicians had immigrated to America. The end of the war saw the end of an era: Schönberg died in 1951, Ravel, Rachmaninov died, Webern died in 1945, Bartok in 1945, Strauss in 1949, Prokofiev died in 1953, Charles Ives died in 1954 (check dates). Who would fill this vacuum?
- (e) Boulez, Stockhausen, & John Cage filled that gap. Boulez pioneered multiple serialism, Stockhausen with electronic music, and Cage with prepared instruments. All three of these guys were still thinking in the modernist mindset of progress.  
Boulez said, if we can serialise pitch in atonal music, why not serialize everything else about music? What if we use a series of durations, dynamics, etc, in very mathematical proportions.  
Stockhausen said, lets use new sounds. He recorded music and then played it back through various filters. His *Junglinge* (young children) had singing filtered through filters, with percussion.

Cage agreed with Stockhausen, but prepared instruments to make new sounds, such as putting aluminum in between piano strings.

- (f) One day, Cage realized that he had it all wrong. He said, “I have always assumed that music had to go somewhere, to say something. But now I realize that it doesn’t have to go somewhere or say anything.” He didn’t think things had to be the old way anywhere, and this was the result of his studies of Zen buddhism. Music has always gone somewhere. This is not just an assumption of modernism, but an assumption of music. He was influenced in this by anti-rational eastern mysticism. This is the break between modernism and postmodernism.

Modernism says “I can figure things out myself.” Postmodernism says, “You can’t trust reason.” This is the Zen koan: meditate on one hand clapping. The purpose of meditating on that is to get you outside your mindset of the law of non-contradiction. Reason itself becomes the enemy.

As a Christian, there’s not a problem with reason, but rationalism is an ideology with problems. Rationalism says that man’s ability to think is the highest good there is. If Rationalism is what the postmodernist thinks is what everybody means by reason, then we should side with the postmodernist, because reason ought not to be the highest authority. Modernistic rationalism has led to millions dying under communism [and under liberal democratic abortion on demand].

Cage said that he would no longer take the “progress” step of artificial control over music. So he turned to arbitrarily choosing in music based on dice rolls (an idea from the *i ching*). Then he thought that silence may be the thing, which resulted in his writing *4.33*.<sup>1</sup>

Another way of getting at aleatoric or chance music is to give each player a series of pitches in a certain order, but then each player can play them in any order that they wish. In a quartet where after playing the quartet members pass the music to the next guy, the timbre of the music changes, and the ordering, so its different every time.

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<sup>1</sup>What about Arvo Pärt’s use of silence in *Tabula Rasa* and other works?

[played *Four* by John Cage (1989), an aleatoric performance: two movements long, 15 minutes each]

Cage saw the idea of modernism as linear. The idea of music going somewhere or being linear was something he disagreed about. “Tyranny and violence fall under the heading of linearity. Indeterminacy as I conceive it, is a leap into non-linearity or abundance.”  
- Cage.

The departure from modernism on Cage’s part is a departure and continuation at the same time. In the same way that we supposedly got to the end of tonality with Mahler, atonality was the next step. For Cage (at least subconsciously), irrationality could be the next step in progress. If we’ve doubted everything since Descartes, why not doubt reason? Postmodernism is an extension of modernism in that sense.

More than that, linear reason leads to a closed universe were we are just machines. If this is true, then we should be sympathetic with Cage in his rejection of a mechanical universe. Cage longs for something outside himself and has to take his hands off his music to get outside himself. He tries to release control to achieve the abundant life. Hodges thinks that Cage has absorbed a Zen mindset into his music.

## 7.1 Questions

What’s happening now? Minimalism is an attractive school of thinking to many people: Philip Glass, Steve Reich, on a popular level George Winston.

How does the offshoot of jazz and rock & roll interplay with these movements? Jazz is a popular level formal structured music. Hodges subscribes to Meyers three levels in “All God’s children and blue suede shoes”: classical, folk, and pop. Jazz is not aleatoric, improvisation in it is within structure. Artists struggle with balancing unity and diversity in their art: too much unity is boring, too much diversity is chaotic. Aleatoric music is diversity to an extreme.

Why is minimalist music called minimalist? Short answer is music with minimal change over the course of time.

How long did Cage use aleatoric techniques, and what was the next technique he used? He pretty much remained aleatoric until his death in 1991.

Can you comment on where music comes from? What's the aesthetic connection between music and creation?

## **8 The Human Being: complex machine or the image of God - Frank Stootman**

Our identity, our intrinsic value, our cosmic significance, our quest for meaning, our dignity - these each have a basis in the image of God. All these come from outside our material universe and are vested in the nature and character of God.

The Bible also reveals that we are alienated from God. This is a broken world. There is a cosmic rift between us and God, but there is restoration possible but with a high cost. God has actually provided a costly solution through the atonement Jesus achieved.

The Biblical story is a holistic grand narrative which gives us both our identity and our problem. However, this narrative is being challenged from two directions: (1) its said to be an unnecessary story, and (2) its ultimately an illusion.

This challenge comes from two directions. (1) There is a rising conviction coming from science that the "I" is merely an illusion. (2) There is a rise in robotic and computer capabilities to challenge human decision-making. This is all being done in the background, and it may not affect you today but will affect how people will be treated in the future.

Today the modern world would not be able to operate without computers. Some people are pushing for the "inevitable" take-over of the world by machines. Silicon is already being implanted into rat brains, and they can control them with RF signals to find people trapped in collapsed buildings.

Having no grounding in the Bible as an external rational and spiritual reference point has consequences:

1. There is no real significance in being human and no cosmic meaning,
2. The dignity of being human is arbitrary,
3. Spirituality as become irrational - meaning is disconnected with reality,

4. the concept of personal evil is lost in the process - behavior is externalized.

Owen Flanagan, "The Problem of the Soul" Basic Books, 2002 sums it up, saying that we are just animals—complex and unusual, but just an animal. "Human perfection within the scientific image... cannot be spiritual perfection, because we do not possess spiritual components." (p. 3).

The rise of Modern Science and the philosophy of naturalism (time + chance + natural selection) has brought about a de-valuing of the nature of being human. Naturalism was originally only applied to physical nature, but it has now been applied to humanity.

What does this Brave New World look like?

1. The importance of our **place** in the universe has been challenged. It's a big place and we're in a small corner of this 10 to 15 billion light year wide universe.
2. Our common sense everyday notions of **space and time** have been challenged. No absolute time, perception of distance and time is relative, space is curved near gravitational objects.
3. The importance of **who** we are has been challenged. Our DNA is only slightly different from that of a chimpanzee: about 1 in 50 of our base pairs are different.
4. What we **believe** about being created in the image of God has been challenged. Ron Dunbar, "We Believe", p. 30 (New Scientist 28 January 2006), argues that our belief systems are a triumph of delusion over truth.
5. The increasing **complexity** of robots and computer technology challenges the notion that we are more than machines - we differ only by degree. By 2020 the density of Integrate Circuits will rival that of the human brain.
6. We have **deprecated** the humanities or at least moved it to the subjective and irrational. True epistemology is seen to come only from measurement. The lack of truth in the humanities has affected both our culture deeply. This loss of truth has greatly affected the action in the background which moves toward the view that we are just machines.

Owen Flanagan acknowledges that science can give us no answers but it is the truth and so (1) we should stop deluding ourselves into accepting stories of god, (2) we should deny ourselves the grasp of selfhood and significance in a manner similar to Buddhism, (3) we should have an existential philosophy in which the goal is a morality that flourishes humanity.

Critiques of the Brave New World.

1. From inside the naturalist paradigm: naturalism never answers ontological issues. It never explains the existence of laws and categories, symmetries, the ability to describe many phenomena with mathematics. Naturalism is no longer interested in questions of ontology: measurement is the only way in which we can be certain.

Ontological questions have been exchanged for a quest for certainty in epistemology.

The Bible speaks clearly of ontology. Genesis 1.1. God told Moses, "I Am who I Am." God is pure isness.

2. The emphasis of Naturalism is on analysis. Understanding is only seen in terms of the relationship between the component parts. This is valuable but not complete.

An important aspect is the reverse process of imagining how the parts and laws can produce a greater complexity by itself. This is the purpose for which something exists and was made.

Information is external. Morse Code can be analysed into components but the information is in the organization of the non random assembly of the components into an organized meaning. There are four chemical bases in DNA: Guanine, Thymine, Adenine, Cytosine. The important thing is the information that is contained in the organizing of these bases.

At the most fundamental level, knowledge is limited not by ignorance by by an intrinsic limitation: the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle in Quantum Mechanics.

The Bible reveals that there is a sovereign God who meshes in with the real universe. When Jesus healed he healed the eye, or the vocal cord. The universe is not a closed system.

Naturalism regards the only form of acceptable, true, and certain epistemology as that of measurement. Truth is that beyond reasonable, measurement doubt. This is how we come to conclusions about atoms, gravity,

etc. The Bible is equally concerned with giving a true and certain epistemology. God is the God of historical events (Deut. 4.1-14). He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of your forefathers, the God who brought Israel out of Egypt. John often speaks of Jesus' interest in the truth and witness to the truth (John 5.31-37, 10.38). There are witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1.3-4). Paul was profoundly interested in truth (1 Cor. 15.29-32). Peter was interested in truth (2 Peter 1.16-18). Science is not the only acceptable criterion for truth. God's revelation is the only acceptable criterion. The epistemology of the Bible is both propositional and narrative.

Summary. The worldview you hold is serious. Naturalism offers a particular view of the world, one from inside a closed system. The Biblical revelation, however, still can be held up as something really worthwhile to consider, because there are weaknesses in other paradigms that the Bible can answer. Naturalism says measurement is the only way to know truth, and the Bible says that there are other ways of knowing truth, and the consistency of revelation and how it resonates as being beyond reasonable doubt that help us see it as truth.

## 8.1 Questions

It seems that prominent scientists can get away with making philosophical statements without scientific basis, but they are accepted because of the authority society affords them as scientists? Many scientists have recognized that there must be an answer from within the naturalist paradigm for questions of human meaning and dignity. Also, because of the authority of science, people have used their authority to abuse it and make non-scientific statements in favor of their particular bias.

## 9 The Emerging Church - Jock McGregor

McLaren is being hailed for his book "a Generous Orthodoxy" as the next Martin Luther. He is travelling around the world encouraging the Emergent church. We are seeing a bunch of people tapping into the zeitgeist of postmodern and disaffected evangelicals. [www.emergentvillage.com](http://www.emergentvillage.com).

D.A. Carson has a book on the the emerging church.

They emphasize that they are not a church, but a loose affiliation. This loose affiliation was put together by McLaren and Padgett in the late 1990s.

McLaren is the acknowledged leader of this movement, though he doesn't like this fact. His book, "a Generous Orthodoxy" is very influential. He is winsome, creative (his book has a chapter 0), cautious (the book is full of footnotes). He says that he goes out of his way in his book to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear. At the end of the book he says that he's not written theology, but a personal confession, not a theological statement. This is the view from which we will start: seeing this book as the heartbeat of a guy with a lot of passions about important things.

What is really driving McLaren and this movement? He is not a theologian, but there are theological implications to the ideas he has put forward. His book is about re-defining orthodoxy, and there are churches being set up along these lines, so its is fair to hold McLaren to these ideas.

McGregor told of having lunch with a young man who burst out that he's sick and tired of Christians who claim to have theological truth and yet don't live anything like what the Bible says they should. He reflects the sensitivities of the postmodern generation. We are sensitive to hypocrisy, the abuse of power, and the nuances behind Christianity. What is part of the package of Christianity? Must you be republican? Why the "we've got the truth, and everybody else is wrong" attitude? McLaren and the emerging church are trying to address young people like that.

McLaren himself has spent 50 years swimming in the evangelical waters of N. America. He started out in the Plymouth Brethren and has been in many other churches, and he is now trying to address weaknesses he perceives. "A New Kind of Christian" (McLaren, 2001) is a dialogue between an older generation pastor and a younger postmodern believer, and it suggests the need for a more generous orthodoxy. You could probably list about two dozen theological ideas that McLaren suggests reformulating.

**Embrace** is a word that McLaren likes very much. He says that the Emerging way is the way of Jesus, the way of love, the way of embrace. They want to embrace (1) the other, (2) each other, (3) and each other's tradition.

1. Embrace the other. The emerging church must be missional. Get rid of us and them thinking; the church is there for everyone. The doctrine of election is not about who gets to go to heaven, but about who gets the privilege of communicating the gospel of grace to the world. Theology shouldn't be done in seminary, but in the context of mission. The purpose of theology is not to get our heads right, but

to get our hearts and actions right: orthodoxy is only for the purpose of orthopraxy. Our love must be radically incarnational; we must take on the identity of those to whom we speak. We are not to lead people from their religion to the Christian religion, but we must lead them to Christ. Salvation is not just for the individual, but for the whole world. Its not just about me and my private salvation, but embrace the other.

2. Embrace each other. Denominationalism and sectarianism in the post-protestant era is wrong. Rather, our focus should not be on who is right, but who is good; not on right thinking, but on right actions. The subtitle of his book summarizes this ecumenism: “I am a missional evangelical, post-protestant liberal conservative, biblical mystical fundamentalist catholic, charismatic orthodox ... emergent unfinished Christian.” We are to embrace each other by looking for what is good in each one; each one of these streams gives us a facet of Jesus. This ecumenical spirit isn’t just about denominations, but also about the left-right split we see.
3. Embrace each other’s traditions. Since Christ, what has God been doing in the world? We must look and see what is good in all that. We must reclaim the good of mysticism and monasticism. “The Ancient Future Faith” One place you don’t want to look is the immediate past. Each tradition gives a different window into who Jesus is, and who knows what is next? A new church is emerging.

Summary. Emerging church is about embrace, rejecting an exclusive sectarian orthodoxy, and embracing a more generous orthodoxy.

McLaren is calling us to replace an attitude of self-righteousness and arrogance with humility. The very stark portrayal of sectarianism is also something that we would not want to support. In terms of his passion and call for attitude adjustment is also something we can agree with. However, this book isn’t just about loving your neighbor and being Christ-like.

1. The book makes strong theological proposals and calls for changes in our orthodoxy.
2. This is a radical call for reformation set in a very sweeping cultural analysis. It looks at our entire heritage and our philosophical shift from

modernity to postmodernity. We can't just leave this as an attitude adjustment.<sup>2</sup>

Emergent's concern about the shift from modern to postmodern comes from their belief that the evangelical church has been hopelessly shaped by modernism. They see postmodernism as the church for what modernity has done. Postmodernism clears the way to better understand the Bible.

The emergent church is one part of a growing part of the church which is rethinking the church in the context of postmodernism. They are the first to apply their changed thinking in the missional life and ministry of the church. Many Christians are hesitant about identifying themselves as emergent church (EC). There are a few scholars who agree with the EC call for reshaping.

Stanley Grenz<sup>3</sup> & John Franke, "Beyond Foundationalism" "Revisioning Theology". They go back to Nancy Murphy, who wrote "Beyond Fundamentalism and Liberalism". She is a professor of philosophy at Fuller. Most of us think that evangelicals fought against modernism, but she argues that they became 'closet modernists' by their belief in absolute truth. Her reading of the problem of modernism is that it believed in absolute truth. Schaeffer said the problem with modernism is that the problem is its humanistic basis, but Murphy says that the problem is not modernism's anti-supernaturalism, but in its belief in absolute truth. She sees absolute truth as foundationalism. Schaeffer saw the Bible as an epistemological basis for absolute truth. Murphy says that at the Enlightenment evangelicals began to view the Bible from a modernist perspective rather than from a biblical perspective—that the inerrantist view of Scripture as propositional truth is modernist.

We begin to see here a lowering of a high view of the Bible, and an elevating of tradition. The postmodern critique is that you cannot get out of your cultural context in interpreting the Bible—there is no God's-eye view anymore.

McLaren says that stating propositions are true is modernist, and that we need to embrace some innovative theological ideas. Many of these ideas have

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<sup>2</sup>We aren't taking time to discuss modernism and postmodernism—I hope that you are familiar with it. Modernism is based on a faith in Reason, that man can develop absolute truth through Reason. Postmodernism says that the Modern view is fundamentally flawed, both historically and philosophically. Postmodernism is deeply sceptical about absolutes, about language's ability to communicate, about our power to create social reality.

<sup>3</sup>He was one of the editors of the modern theology text we used at Covenant College

merit, and are great critiques of the seeker-sensitive movement of the baby-boomers. Some of their ideas about narrative theology, incarnation theology, missional theology have merit. However, these ideas are put in a context that excludes propositional truth. This is a subtle shift from both/and to either/or regarding the propositional/narrative differences in Scripture. They say that the better way is narrative and incarnational. You can fight over it, but we're going to live it, the emerging church would say.

Why the ancient creeds and not the Westminster creeds? They are too modern. Why embrace Christian denominations and not the other religions? The B'ahai faith is the most extreme 'emergent' religion. McLaren wants to stick with Jesus, but where does he get this? This is the issue of truth.

The issue of good and evil is an essential issue, but so is the issue of truth and error: you cannot set aside the latter in favor of the former. You cannot follow Pannenberg and say that one day we'll know truth in the *eschaton*. You cannot know Jesus apart from the words of Scripture. McLaren knows that you can embrace people even if you don't approve them, and he applies this to homosexuals. Many homosexuals feel they can't accept someone's embrace if they disagree with their life-styles.

How does McLaren know what do disapprove of? This is an issue of truth. The Emerging church assigns Schaeffer and other conservative evangelicals as foundationalists because they believe in propositional truth.

How do we know truth? We have God's revelation: the words of life in the Bible. This was Schaeffer's answer to the epistemological crisis. The Emerging church has rejected this answer, and does not see the Bible as a way forward. He values the Bible in a different way.

Where does the term "generous orthodoxy" come from? Yale produced a bunch of young theologians who came up with "post-liberalism". These guys like the Bible and say that its great, but they see it as the norming book that guides a tradition. Its like a rulebook for a chess club: it gives the rules for thinking, living, and acting together, but its not the truth. That's post-liberal thinking, and it comes to McLaren from guys like Stanley Grenz and the post-liberals.

Through this influence McLaren has rediscovered tradition and the place of the Bible in tradition. The result of this view of tradition writes off the recent history of evangelicalism as modernist. They take out of this a scepticism about truth, saying that we should be more humble. This can be helpful, but they take it to the point of saying that even the Bible can be less than true, so they hold to tradition and say we won't have truth until

the eschaton. McLaren and the EC hold to a communitarian conception of truth.

McGregor loves the creativity [of the emerging church] and their sensitivity to the church. What we have there in generous orthodoxy is tragically not very generous. In Scripture we have the words of life, and if we mute them to try and bring tradition along side, to try and take the deferential view, if we dim the light of Scripture for fear of offending, what are we giving this generation? A watered-down orthodoxy will always be more palatable to this generation, but it isn't what they need. What McLaren proposes is to veil that light, and huddle in the dark. What we need to do rather than shine the light in the eyes so it blinds people is to shine it on their feet so that they can walk with you toward Jesus.

You can accept absolute truth and still not know where you are. This is not a relativist, but an admission of our short-comings. McGregor feels the Emerging Church's generous orthodoxy is process theology in new guise.

## 9.1 Questions

Isn't this just a result of evangelical Christianity's lack of love for the unbelievers? Yes, we must repent of our past sins of neglect, but we must also be cautious of a false humility. We must be under the light of Scripture. How do you know that nobody knows truth—that's an arrogant statement. If you look behind the postmodern critique of absolute truth you'll find the arrogant assumption that no one knows truth.

Are the emerging folks saying that in premodern Christianity truth was not absolute? Some of the emerging church go all the way back to the greeks and say that foundationalism is an old western problem. Some would say, is not searching for truth a human trait? The quest for truth is a mark of the image of God in us. Coming up with the creeds was a difficult struggle for the church- they were forged on an anvil of blood, and they won't solve the denominationalism of the church.

A natural progression of the seeker-friendly movement would be to make it more seeker-friendly. How do we as a church protect ourselves from the emerging church? Schaeffer said people don't always think through the ramifications of the emerging church (i.e. Jacob's Well, Solomon's Porch). If you hear their sermons, you would hear very biblical sermons. But don't think its just about these smaller adjustments to make people feel more comfortable. Dr. Schaeffer grew his hair long so that he would be 'hip' and people

would listen to him. McLaren is not just tweaking his methods, he says that we must change our message. This must be addressed very, very carefully. We've seen in our history where wrong thinking can lead, especially in the area of religion.

We have the words of eternal life, they are precious, and we may fight about how to understand them, but let's not seek truth having already made up our mind that we cannot find it.

Schaeffer says that man starting from himself doesn't have a sufficient basis for the truth, but we have the Bible. How does the Bible help us because we have to interpret it anyway? McLaren points out that a weakness of the Bible is its interpreter. However, if you know you have an unchanging starting point, a proposition which is true. If you remove this, the interpretation problem is magnified thousands-fold. How do you know which religion God has worked through? Secondly, some would say that we don't have the autographs of the Bible, but the thousands of manuscripts we have show remarkable agreement. We might not have a God's-eye-view, but we do have God's viewpoint in Scripture. We can think of truth as circles, and the interpreters may argue and debate the edges, but the center is clear, and becomes clearer, and the center is where we need to live our lives. We don't know exhaustively all there is about how God loves us, but we know enough to know its true.

## **10 Perfecting Ourselves to Death: The Pursuit of Excellence and the Perils of Perfectionism - Richard Winter**

Our culture throws images at us that are not realistic, but they are enhanced and airbrushed. There was a magazine article "Keeping the powers of decrepitude at bay." People are working on anti-aging breakthroughs.

[viewed clip from "The Swan" - a TV make-over that was three months of surgery, exercise, and psycho-therapy.]

The Seductive Sirens of Perfectionism. Where we see the pull toward perfectionism most profoundly is in visual media.

1. Appearance.
2. The world through rose-tinted glasses

### 3. computer-enhanced, air-brushed,

The pull of technology. We see adds for beautiful, technically savvy cars, advances in medicine which push back brokenness and the fall in remarkable ways. Genetic engineering leads us to wonder if we will redesign humans to be genetically healthy in incredible ways. This may lead to ‘enhancing’ the human body to better than it already is. If we can make smart mice, what about a little of this technology for your SATs or graduate school exams. Mood enhancement drugs, sperm banks.

Will there be a post-human? This may lead on to what many have called “techno sapiens”. We experience the benefits of music reproduction, powerpoint presentation. Machines go on improving, but do people improve? We still have the same problems of human nature, and the machines give some hope that we can reach a higher level of perfection ourselves.

In sport, in academia, we go on to higher and higher degrees. You may meet your ‘perfect’ partner, have a ‘perfect’ wedding, move into a ‘perfect’ home, have ‘perfect’ kids, remodel your perfect kitchen, take the perfect vacation. Beauty, brains, brawn, & bucks—these are the idols of our perfectionist culture.

Is our epidemic of obesity and poverty due to people giving up trying because they know that they can’t reach the perfectionism our culture holds out as the goal?

Types of Perfectionism.

1. (1) Appearance
2. (2) Performance
3. (3) Moral
4. (4) All around

Assets and liabilities of perfectionism

1. Perfectionism is sometimes good, sometimes bad. You want a perfectionist neurosurgeon. Its usually in the area of relationships that perfectionists fall down.
2. Healthy and unhealthy perfectionism.
3. Normal or “Neurotic”

4. People of excellence v. perfectionism
5. A spectrum of perfectionism?

#### Perfectionism - a spectrum

1. Perfectionism can range from dysfunctional to healthy to non-perfectionist, and they there are the lazy, disorganized, unreliable, and lacking in self-discipline.
2. Unhealthy perfectionists: unreachable standards, compulsive straining, no satisfaction in a job well done, self-worth measured in terms of productivity and accomplishment.
3. Normal perfectionists: pursue excellence, derive pleasure from labor to achieve accomplishment, feel free to be less precise in situations that permit, enjoy a job well done.

Conscientiousness-based virtues: self control, obedience, responsibility, accountability, etc. and these need to be balanced on warmth based virtues like kindness, mercy, love, etc.

Thought patterns of perfectionists:

1. All or nothing. Some perfectionists have taken their own lives when accused of failure.
2. Fear of making mistakes. They are always disappointed with reality and themselves. They have an intense need for affection, and they often break off acquaintances because they haven't found their ideal of friendship.
3. Tyranny of oughts and shoulds in life. The list of endless duties leaves them feeling guilty and condemned—a case of hardening of the “ought-eries”.
4. Need for control.

Perils of perfectionism

1. anxiety and worry

2. Indecisiveness, because you want to make the perfect decision. You want to marry the perfect person, so you never make up your mind: nothing ventured, nothing lost.
3. Procrastination. The publishers had to wrestle the book from my hands, because I wouldn't give it up.
4. Decreased productivity and performance. Those high on perfectionist scales don't perform as well, and they have higher psychosomatic symptoms like high blood pressure, headaches, etc.
5. Eating disorders
6. depression
7. suicidal tendencies
8. relationship problems - many demanding perfection leave a trail of broken hearts because they never commit to one person.

Attitude to the body: all or nothing is a common attitude. Think of physical beauty in the Bible: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Abigail. Ezekiel 16:7-14.

Inner beauty (Esther 2.2,7,17). Absalom was praised as handsome (2 Sam 14.25). 1 Peter 3.3-4 talks about beauty not coming from outward adornment, but from the inner self.

The Roots of Perfectionism.

1. Genes - some are made more perfectionist than others. You can see this in very young children, and it's not necessarily bad, but it must be balanced.
2. Culture - Switzerland and Germany are more obsessed with time than some other cultures.
3. Family - Some by example, some by shaming, teach their children to be a certain way. Freud had a point about anal fixations, but it's more about the issue of control. If you feel out of control during the early years, you may want to be in control the rest of your lives. Shame and abuse from parents toward their children (yelling, you stupid kid who spilled your orange juice).

4. School - peers can be incredibly cruel; imperfections are mocked.
5. Legalistic church environment - this can breed perfectionism. What effect do our beautiful churches and Sunday finery have on one struggling with porn addiction or a failing marriage or a child who is being abused? Somehow we must create an gracious environment where sinners feel welcome.
6. Shame
7. Fear
8. Pride - we want to be better than the other people, to be top dog.

Practical strategies for help with perfectionism. Its helpful to evaluate the pros and cons of perfectionism. Recognize the all or nothing patterns in your thinking. Keep a journal of thoughts or feelings. Move from your idealistic world to a more real world where you accept that there are imperfections. Accept day by day, little by little.

“When Perfect Isn’t Good Enough: Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism” by Mark Anthony and Richard Swinson, gives practical strategies for recovering perfectionists.

Perfectionism - beliefs about the nature of reality. Evolution, chance, and time...? Impersonal God or energy - perfect already? Personal God, who created us perfect, and we’ve fallen from that original perfection, and we’re in the process of being restored to perfections, and we have a memory and longing to be more than we are.

Isaiah 40.6,7 the glory of humankind fades...

Where your treasure is, your heart will be also. Don’t set your treasure below.

What is really important to you? Do you spend all your energy fighting imperfections, decay, and death, or is it about character and developing character?

Perfectionism isolates you from God, because you are trying to take his place, and from other people, because you have no mercy or grace for them.

We’re told in Isaiah 53 that there was no beauty or majesty in Christ to attract us to him, yet he came so that we can be set on the road to God’s perfection. In Christianity we find the free gift of grace from God. Our fundamental worth and identity don’t depend on our performance: we are

loved by God, and are set free to pursue excellence and high standards out of gratitude to God, with the freedom to fail because our identity is not wrapped up in our achievements.

The optimum environment for change is to be in relationship with God, understanding his grace, and in relationship with other people—i.e. the church. People need to know that they’re loved with the worst hanging out of them. The movie “Mostly Martha” is the story of a German chef who dines every night alone, works at a high-quality immaculate restaurant, and everything is structured until she takes her 8 year old niece into her home, which disrupts her life. Then another character comes into her life, an Italian chef, who is not German, but Italian to the core, and is a relaxed non-perfectionist.

[viewed clip from “Mostly Martha”]

“The Velveteen Rabbit” illustrates the power of love and the healing that comes to all of us. What is real? asked the Rabbit. “Real is when a child loves you,” said the Skin Horse. “Generally, by the time you are real your hair has been rubbed off... but that doesn’t matter, except to people who don’t understand.”

Rom. 8.18, 2 Cor. 3.18, Rom. 8.22-25 We groan for glory, waiting patiently and eagerly.

## 11 Book titles

These are books that looked interesting to me on the book table or that speakers recommended which sounded of interest to me. They’re not in any particular order

1. D. A. Carson, “Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church”
2. D. A. Carson, “Telling the Truth” *on evangelizing postmoderns, recommended by Jock McGregor*
3. Robert Seiple & Dennis Hoover, “Religion & Security: The new nexus in international relations”
4. William Dyrness, “How Does America Hear the Gospel?”
5. Jerram Barrs, “The Heart of Evangelism”