

PREFACE

In 2017 Terry Heaton authored *The Gospel of SELF, How Jesus Joined The GOP*, two years later he published another book titled, *The Gospel of SELF, How Pat Robertson Stole The Soul Of The GOP*. The two books are identical, as far as I can detect, except for the 8th and final chapters. The final chapter of the original printing lends a significantly different message than the final chapter of the latter version. People, myself included, easily ask simply for a copy of *The Gospel of SELF* not knowing or caring about which version they are getting. Since the first printing was smaller in number, it has fewer used copies in circulation than the later version, which is available in greater used quantities and is still in print now.

Both are good reads but I was disappointed that Mr. Heaton didn't just append the newer chapter to the old version, but for what are probably good and valuable reasons he didn't. Since it is more common that people will end up with the newer, revised, version, instead of the original, I felt it important to provide selected readers of those revised versions with a peek at Chapter 8 from the original version.

Here then is an unauthorized copy of Terry Heaton's *The Gospel Of SELF, How Jesus Joined The GOP*, Chapter 8,

After reading this version, I invite you to view this talk by Peter Diamandis, author of *The Future Is Faster Than You Think* at his Global Summit 2018 of his Singularity University. Where he describes the reality of coming and converging disruptive changes that we will experience and deal with during the coming decade and beyond. These observations reinforce and amplify Mr. Heaton's observations of the change of Eras we are experiencing now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTTgdtl8FvM>

Chapter Eight

Towards a Post-Christian Tomorrow

Postmodernism is a change-or-be-changed world. The word is out: Reinvent yourself for the twenty-first century or die! Some would rather die than change

--Leonard Sweet, cultural historian

All of the great religions of the world attempt, in one form another, to resolve the inherent conflict in the nature of being human as it relates to a supreme being, and, especially, its relationship with other humans. To be human is to be self-centered at core. The most basic of human instincts, after all, is survival, and it's unlikely we'd survive without a predisposition towards protecting and saving one's self. One could even make the extreme case that reproduction is a form of self-centeredness, a way to ensure that our blood will live forever.

Religion attempts to place an internal governor on the high-octane engine of self by asserting that self-sacrifice is the path to a human life well lived. It does this by providing rewards for such living as a way to hold back the insatiable appetite of the self. The illusion of our separateness is supported by myths and legends emphasizing individuality and future rewards to those who gave of themselves so that other could go on. Life, especially in the West, is presented as competitive and a zero-sum game, which makes real sacrifice even more distant.

The television series *Madmen* gave us a view of Madison Avenue in the 1960's, the heyday of mass marketing, wherein smart people manipulated consumers by exploiting the self-centered nature of humanity. Mass marketing tactics all bring about results by expressing how consumer products and services can improve life for the one receiving the message, and we tapped into this regularly at *The 700 Club* during the 1980s. The gospel of self teaches, among other things, that Christians who are saved are unique among all people; that they

are worthy of God's special provision and blessings, including protection, health, possessions, and wealth; that they have answers where others only have questions; that their blessings are to be a sign among others that God is with them; that passing the message along is their duty; that financially supporting those who taught them is their responsibility; that they should surround themselves with those who believe as they do; and that they should fight against any person or institution that tried to take these blessings from them. Politically, this means liberals.

The gospel of self is not a phrase condemning Christians as selfish. It merely means that they are the recipients of a message that approves of self-centered behavior in the name of faith by emphasizing only certain aspects of the religion over others. This produces people who may be entirely sincere in their understanding of life around them but behave in a matter that represents special snowflake status to those who don't subscribe to that understanding. This is the inherent difficulty that culture has with these Christians and why the campaign of Donald Trump was so successful. The Republican message generally fits the haves of society, that it includes those who think of themselves as haves, even though they have not. This is a fruit of the gospel of self.

And today, as our culture shifts from the modern to post-modern, the need for an internal governor is even greater, for absent such, networked people will each go their own way and freedom will be highly susceptible to totalitarianism. As John Milton wrote, "License they mean when they cry liberty," which is a powerful observation about the wants of people absent a check on their behavior, preferably internal. Postmodernism, after all, is the age of participation, and how exactly are we to participate together absent some form of restraining bolt on our behavior?

One of the most baffling questions I have ever been asked came from my then seven-year old daughter Jenny on the way home from school one day in 1978. Texas Instruments had introduced the handheld calculator ten years earlier, and America was in the midst of an argument over whether these things were food for culture or not. One side argued that students should never be permitted to bring one to class, because it would "destroy" one of the sacred

“three Rs”—‘rithmetic. This was not an unfounded criticism. Holding her own calculator, my little daughter asked me, “Why do I have to learn math if I have one of these?”

The question is profound, and I have been trying to answer it for over forty years. At issue isn’t the matter of learning adding, subtracting, multiplication tables, and such; it’s about learning to apply mathematics, to participate in math instead of simply studying it. Technology had disrupted arithmetic in such a way as to render learning it basically unnecessary. We used to get questions back then about how on earth a store clerk who didn’t know math could ever make change properly in the event of a cash register failure. That’s been proven to be a fearful and specious view of tomorrow

This question was my first exposure to the mysteries of postmodernism and its emphasis on participation over observation. Postmodernism will impact every nook and cranny of what we’ve known and trusted in the modern era, and much of it is taking place outside the view of the institutions of the West. It is a confusing and chaotic philosophy that results in the dismantling of reliability in the study of how things work culturally and philosophically.

However, to people such as Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren, and myself, postmodernism isn’t so much a philosophy as it is an era in Western Civilization. Using a cultural mantra as a divider, here’ how I view “common era” history and the future:

Pre-modernism, from the creation of the church at Rome to the printing press: “I believe, therefore I understand.” One’s professed faith, and the protected knowledge that undergirded that faith was the operating mantra of this era. Even governments of the West feared the power of Rome and gladly paid tribute in order to have the serfs kept in line by the church.

Modernism, from the printing press to the network: “I think and reason, therefore I understand.” During this time, the Academy was resurrected and the power of Rome was gutted by not only the printing press but the printing of the first common language English Bible. “The jewel of the elites is in the hands of the laity,” was the lament of priests, which eventually led to the reformation and

the birth of Protestantism. It also witnessed the rise of atheism and beliefs flowing from it, such as evolution and a dependence on science and the sciences. Perhaps its greatest contribution to the West is the concept of colonialism, where Christianity was used in many places to separate indigenous people from their land in the name of God.

Postmodernism, which began with the counterculture movements of the 1960s and the invention of the personal computer and the Internet. “I participate, therefore I understand.” This era has just begun, and its study has been my life’s work for the past fifteen years and the subject of my long-running glob, *The Pomo Blog*. Postmodernism will impact every facet of life in the West, and just as the printing press was disruptive in the fifteenth century, so will the Internet be in the twenty-first century.

There’s really no such thing as a pure modernist or pure postmodernist, because each inherits the foundation of its predecessor. Reason didn’t replace faith, but their coexistence influenced each other. Participation won’t replace reason or faith, but it will certainly alter their cultural influences, and that will mean a future that’s chaotic, exciting, challenging, and uncertain.

I do not believe there is a single, universally accepted definition of the term postmodernism. As a movement, it essentially points to the end of modernism, a cultural era that touted science, logic, and the mind of man over traditions, especially religious ones. I also doubt that there is such a thing as a pure postmodernist, for that would mean somebody completely anti-intellectual and entirely relativistic. In fact, it’s very difficult for a logical modernist to accept or even understand concepts so contrary to his or her own core perspective. Therefore, rather than taking a standard definition from a philosophy text, it’s more useful to compare postmodernism with modernism on a few important levels:

- Modernists share a universal faith in logic and science. Postmodernists (“pomos”) see the realism of limitations.
- Words like purpose, design, and hierarchy are modernist, while postmodernists would rather use play, chance and anarchy. Pomos

don't completely reject logic, but their own experiences tell them that order isn't overall, and they passionately despise what they see as the inherent elitism of hierarchy.

- Modernists view much of life at arm's length. Postmodernists experience it as participatory. Life is not "out there" to pomos; rather, it is all around us—something that we can have as little or as much of as we choose.

One of the most defining differences is with Christian concepts of God. The modernist sees God, the Father. The postmodernist sees God, the Holy Spirit. God, the Father, represents distant authority, which pomos reject, while God, the Holy Spirit is among us, something we can experience for ourselves. For the modernist, the parts logically make up the whole, but the pomos view the whole as greater than the parts.

The beatniks of the 1950s were the precursors of the pomos, but the counterculture movement of the 1960s—and the dawn of yet another war—combined with many other events to put in place a general disillusionment with all that modernism's logic and reason had built. Hierarchies were the new overlords, and we had evolved once again into a culture of the haves with almost absolute control over the have-nots.

A part of the disillusionment was a growing and deep distrust of the institutions that govern us, both private and public. Understanding became less about learning from experts—who were increasingly seen as self-serving—and more about self-experiencing or getting close to those who had such experience. Because experts cannot be entirely trusted, participation equals understanding.

Media was the first institution disrupted, but others are coming. One that intrigues me is medicine, for many reasons. When the advent of the Web, the American Medical Association—the group assigned to protect the medical status quo—created a special lobbying arm to ensure that anything regarding medicine online would be under its authority. We don't need everyday people practicing medicine, right?

There's a remarkably apropos statement in the 1992 film *Lorenzo's Oil*, in which parents fight to find a cure for their son who is suffering from a very rare disease. "The interest of the scientist is not the same as the interest of the parent," says Lorenzo's father, and this expresses a part of the dissatisfaction with modernism expressed above.

And so it is just a matter of time before patients everywhere got together to share stories of support for those with similar afflictions. In the article "The stage is being set to enable patient-drive disruptive innovation." Dave deBronkart, Vince Kuraitis, and David C. Kibbe of the remarkable site e-patients.net and its "Society of Participatory Medicine" write that our health data belongs to us.

When we as patients get our hands on our information, and when innovators get their hands on medical data, things will change. Remember that "we as patients" includes you yes you, when your time comes and the fan hits your family. This is about you being locked in, or you getting that you want.

To paraphrase Jay Rosen, patients have "overcome their own atomization," which is to say they're no longer only connected "up" to the doctors, hospitals, or other authorities in the medical community; they are now also connected to each other, and that means trouble for the authority of the institution. Postmodernism doesn't do away with modernist authority; it simply changes the nature of that authority by spreading expertise horizontally throughout the culture. The doctor is still the doctor, but he's no longer the absolute authority. This type of scene will play out across all of modernism's institutions, and each will cry foul and demand protection from the onslaught.

Postmodernism and its weapons, including deconstruction, will impact every corner of Western Civilization. This includes the law, education, government, and finance, to name a few. The issue is credentialing and authority, especially that which is derived from protected knowledge. All of this is highly pertinent to this book, because postmodernism points to a very different future, something most Christians will see as the culture forsaking the church, but it's

really much bigger than that. Nevertheless, that is the way it will be presented by every institution facing disruption.

The Post-Christian

Evangelicalism is such a key part of colonialism that it is hard to separate the two, so discussion of either are similar. But the term “post-Christian” is often used to describe changes and circumstances better associated with the bigger cultural shift of postmodernism. I use the term to identify the diminishing impact of Christianity on the culture, whereas most current use of it relates to individual believers. In this sense, it is inadequate and mostly self-serving. There are generally two types using the term: those who use it defensively to threaten supporters into believing it is evil personified and those who play offense and wish to use it to beat those same people into submission for their ignorance. Post-Christian “hallelujahs” are the flip side of post-Christian “the sky is falling” rhetoric.

Much of the thinking about so-called “post-Christianity” involves highly black and white, all-or-nothing reasoning, and this is about as far from postmodernism as one can get. As noted, one era doesn’t supplant the old; it only modifies it, and this is where most run amiss when declaring our world “post-Christian.” Here’s the way Wikipedia defines it:

Postchristianity is the loss of the primacy of the Christian worldview in political affairs, especially in the Global North where Christianity had previously flourished in favor of alternative worldviews such as secular nationalism. It includes personal world views, ideologies, religious movements or societies that are no longer rooted in the language and assumptions of Christianity, at least explicitly, although they had previously been in an environment of ubiquitous Christianity (i.e. Christendom).

The Barna Group provides data that helps identify people who are then placed into a research demographic labeled “post-Christians.” Here’s the way the company’s website defines the term:

Post-Christian Metrics

The level of irreligion in America depends on how you measure it. And the vitality of faith in America is much more than simply how people label themselves. Barna Group tracks the following 15 metrics related to faith, which speaks to the lack of Christian identity, belief, and practice.

Post-Christian = meet at least 60% of the following 15 factors (9 or more factors)

Highly Post-Christian = meet at least 80% of the following 15 factors (12 or more factors)

1. do not believe in God
2. identify as atheist or agnostic
3. disagree that faith is important in their lives
4. have not prayed to God (in the last year)
5. have never made a commitment to Jesus
6. disagree the Bible is accurate
7. have not donated money to a church (in the last year)
8. have not attended a Christian church (in the last year)
9. agree that Jesus committed sins
10. do not feel a responsibility to “share their faith”
11. have not read the Bible (in the last week)
12. have not volunteered at church (in the last week)
13. have not attended Sunday school (in the last week)
14. have not attended religious small group (in the last week)
15. do not participate in a house church (in the last year”

Barna and many others have determined that “irreligion” is part and parcel of a post-Christian culture, but that is a fundamentally flawed argument. For one, irreligious is a loaded word with synonyms like theistic, unbelieving, nonbelieving,

agnostic, heretical, heathen, and pagan. It therefore assumes that those no longer governed by the absolute tenets of Christianity are not spiritual or religious whatsoever. This is simply untrue, as witnessed by the work of organizations, such as David Hayward's *The Lasting Supper*, that help extract people from the grips of evangelical fundamentalism. Second, it does not reflect the reality of history, where cultural shifts are not a part of all-or-nothing claims. Three, by these metrics, I would qualify as post-Christian, and that is dishonest to say the least. Four, it's terribly simplistic, which may be a necessity for a research company like Barna, but that makes it misleading in its usefulness to cultural observers. It does, however, provide the means for separating groups of people, which may make sense for those wishing to do so, but it further harms necessary efforts to bring people together.

Therefore those who use the term need to understand that this definition harms their wishes for relevance in arguing points related to the subject, whether for it or against it. In logic, this is called beginning at the wrong place in constructing an argument or narrative. While I cannot deny the growth and crescendo at the voice of secularism, that is simply an extreme in the concept of a post-Christian culture. Has the Christian dominance of the West been impacted? Of course it has, and that's why I include post-Christianity in views of postmodernism as a reference to a new cultural era.

Emergent/Emerging Church

I have come to my conclusions about postmodern current events through my own studies and not from affiliation with any other group or group of thinkers. Those conclusions, however, are remarkably similar to what can be found in a roughly ten-year old movement called the Emergent or Emerging Church.

Brian McLaren is largely believed the contemporary founder of the movement, although a CBN document says it originated with the Jesus Movement of the 1970s. McClaren's 2008 book *A New Kind of Christian* jump-started the rapid growth of the movement today. As the CBN article notes, it is facing great criticisms from the status quo of the church:

Since many of the authors and pastors that are associated with the emerging movements have continued to gain notoriety, criticisms about the emerging church have escalated. And without a statement of beliefs or official doctrinal statement, Emergent Village has done little to quiet its critics. Because the emerging church has no organizational structure and is an incredibly loose collection of Christians, the conversations that are taking place in churches and coffee shops around the country to raise even more eyebrows of concerned pastors, who question the theological safety of such an open discussion, the alignment some were starting to show with traditionally liberal political groups and the abandonment of some churches began to show to formal leadership structures.

The false presupposition of the above argument is that understanding can only come from an ordered list of beliefs, but this is an inescapable form of enmity between modernity and postmodernism. Trying to reason postmodernism with a modernist mind requires the natura of amphibians or changelings. How does one teach flight to a caterpillar?

The real postmodern test for the Emergent group will come when it decides, if ever, that it needs to change from a movement to an institution, for the latter will require the type of organizational structure and “statement of beliefs or official doctrinal statement” stated above. This could easily destroy the movement simply by placing it as yet another system of Christian beliefs for study and approval or disapproval by modernist theologians. They will find it too chaotic to be “of God.”

One of the stark differences between cultural modernism and postmodernism is in one’s need for order, and the other’s acceptance of chaos. Chaos is the arch-enemy of modernism, because it is viewed as countercultural and dangerous. Rioting in the streets, for example, is a tangible fruit of chaos from the modernist perspective, and it’s often used directly or indirectly to steer discussions back to the modernist narrative. Order’s companion is control, top-down control, so chaos is a frightening concept. To the pomo, however, chaos doesn’t represent disorder as much as it does opportunity, and they believe one

can venture into chaos without the automatic assumption of annihilation that drives the modernist fear.

In 1935, an alcoholic named Bill Wilson met another alcoholic, Dr. Bob Smith, in Akron, Ohio, and on June 10 began Alcoholics Anonymous, the father of all twelve-step movements. So important was this date in human history that *Time* magazine named Wilson one of the 100 most influential people of the twentieth century. One in every five people in the US has participated in a twelve-step program, and AA's influence on the lives of millions worldwide is incalculable.

Alcoholics Anonymous is the prototypical postmodern institution. There is no formal hierarchy, only "trusted servants." There are no rules, only guiding principles. Even the twelve steps themselves are but "suggestions." Nobody forces anybody to do anything in AA. Concepts like "self-support," anonymity, unity, and autonomy, along with the principles like humility, courage, love, and forgiveness guide groups, and members. AA isn't perfect, because people aren't perfect, and not every experience with the organization is a good one.

But AA is fascinating to observe, for it does the function where logic and reason say it should not. It is just too chaotic. The governors of the group are all internal, and this is its strength. If you want to stop drinking, you are a member. Period. If you want to stay sober, you will serve others. You can choose your own internal governor; it just can't be yourself, because that doesn't seem to work.

These ideas are too mushy for science, and yet science—in the form of the medical community—regularly refers people to AA. Why? Because it's free and it saves lives, whether the "how" can be explained scientifically nor not.

Whatever Christianity will look like in the post-Christian future, it will likely contain the following elements:

- There will be no pulpits. Pomos reject the absolute nature of authority and the top-down, self-driven functionality of modernist expertise. Learning is a participatory process in the post-modern era.

- It will be participatory to a very large extent, because it's now possible for those outside the modern channels of knowledge growth to become knowledgeable and to experience what was formerly reserved for the haves, regardless of the currency involved.
- In spiritual matters, the "Holy Spirit" will be God, not some distant father figure with a white beard who resides on a throne beyond our reach. People can participate with the spirit, whereas "the Father" is considered unreachable without the intervention of Jesus, the Son, and even then, one must be on her belly in the acknowledgement of her own worthlessness.
- There will be no secret language or handshake or "Christianese" designed to separate believers from the others or signal their own superiority. Connectivity is the tool of the postmodernist, not "Come out from among them and be ye separate."
- There will be no codified set of laws to obey, for humans are incapable of keeping laws, especially as they relate to religion. Therefore, the internal governor of behavior will be education and knowledge, not a series of promises that are assumed kept by people with differing views of God and their response to him/her/it.
- True religion won't be based on any future event, such as where one will reside in "the afterlife." The spirit exists in the here and now and is not subject to the laws of time and space. Living one's life in fear of tomorrow is not living at all, for the best one can do is merely hope to live.

The irony of all of this is that many of these things will come about due to actions, words, and behavior of Evangelical Christians. The mere suggestion of a post-Christian tomorrow will drive many evangelicals to even greater extremes than seen today. This will push them farther into cultural irrelevance as they await the prophesied return of Jesus. As mentioned earlier, this could become dangerous for those who disagree. Zeal in the name of zeal is a loose cannon, especially among those who do not have leaders who have the intellectual capacity to keep

up and are used as a hammer by leaders who have ulterior motives, nearly all self-driven.

Net neutrality is one of the factors driving us forward, and I suspect we will continue to see this threatened, as modernist forces attempt to turn the Web into a series of dumb pipes, like cable, and nothing more. This would turn a public utility into a corporation governed profit center, which will kill innovation in the name of saving the culture. I don't think that this would ever be acceptable to a citizenry that has already turned the communications world upside-down and now threatens many other institutions. "f the people, by the people, and for the people" is now an omnipresent reality. Along with the tool of deconstruction, it's hard to imagine an event or situation that could restore top-down dominance in such a way that it would negatively impact the revolution of postmodernism.

The next few decades will witness both destruction and opportunity in ways similar to how the printing press disrupted the culture in the fifteenth century and beyond. The very concept of work is being challenged by robotics, including self-driving vehicles. Will we all have more leisure time, or will work be completely redefined? Forty percent of the labor force is self-employed, according to the US Labor Department, and that's something new and worthy of attention.

Politics has change forever, and we're never going back to an era where a single narrative governs everybody. As we begin the presidency of Donald Trump, we're all going to be forced to deal with issues that divide us more than ever, for the Bible teaches that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

This is why the gospel of self is such an extraordinarily import matter to consider. We simply must find a way to shape the Christian message to one that's mor ecumenical and less "I'm in the special group," which is a key part of the self-centered faith. This is going to take a bottom-up effort, for no one will accept such a message from anyone in authority, whether horizontal or hierarchical.

Many look at tomorrow and envision only a dystopian world. I am not one of them because I maintain a faith in people who eventually get it right, and I think that may well be a part of what we are witnessing today. The God I know judges the church—His people—not those that others view as sinners, and if

that's the truth, then the gospel of self will be swept away as the heresy it really is, and the land will be allowed to heal. A war is at hand—a civil war, if you will—one that will be fought on a networked battlefield. Eventually, this war will include the entire world, for we are all just people, each trying to do the best we can with what we know. We're not different as we may think. Many of our commonalities unite us in the quest for a better tomorrow.