

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Theological Considerations

The lectures and this supporting thesis are built on a foundational idea that the end of modernity and the new, postmodern world presents the church with both timely and unique opportunities to reengage the culture and refresh and renew worship.

Additionally, the lectures and supporting thesis are built upon the assumption that the early church and classic Christianity provide the postmodern church with patterns and language which it can use to effectively connect with the postmodern world.

Considerations centered on three primary elements will serve to shore up these foundational assumptions:

- 1) Theological considerations about worship.
- 2) Theological considerations about the church.
- 3) Missiological considerations.

Apart from supporting the foundational assumptions associated with the thesis, exploring these theological considerations also provides a biblical baseline by which to measure how each have changed over time and, especially, how they can be used to effectively engage postmodern culture. This has been a particularly helpful benefit in designing the accompanying lectures.

Considerations about Worship

This thesis maintains that we must restore a proper theology of worship and suggests that worship theology, like so many other elements of classic Christianity, has gathered layers of historical accretion over time. Like a precious artifact, it must be cleaned and restored down to its original finish before contemporary eyes will be able to see what was once more clear.

As the bride of Christ, the church's singular purpose is to worship him. That purpose is never-ending: It is a perpetual one that will continue even, or especially, in heaven throughout eternity. The Shorter Catechism reminds us that "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Worship must be put first because it necessarily has God as both its subject and its object. Worship is about reciting God's saving acts and deeds throughout history. We are invited by name to worship him. Therefore, we must accept the invitation to worship – with God as both its subject and object – before we turn our attention to any task, no matter how noble.

The tasks of the church – evangelism, discipleship, teaching, social action, etc. – are both critical to its health and outgrowths of its purpose, but they are also temporary. This is another reason we must go about them with zeal, for they will cease to be necessary at the end of time when Christ restores and redeems all things. The tasks of the church are the joyful response to what God has done for us, and what we have experienced in the community of worship. The purpose of the church is to worship. Our whole purpose for being is to worship God. Our whole person should worship God.

In the modern era, we learned quite well how to worship God with our minds, primarily through hearing the word, but in focusing almost exclusively upon this more

intellectual form of worship, we neglected other healthy, biblical components. In attempting to outline a proper theology of worship, I first turn to symbol and story, for they were two of the more prominent casualties in modernity's assault on the Christian faith. A.W. Tozer beautifully spells out the biblical theology of worship with his retelling of a well-known story:

One of the greatest tragedies that we find, even in this most enlightened of all ages, is the utter failure of millions of men and women ever to discover why they were born.

Deny it if you will – and some persons will – but wherever there are humans in the world, there are people who are suffering from a hopeless and depressing kind of amnesia. It forces them to cry out, either silently within themselves or often with audible frustration, 'I don't even know why I was born!'

...Our first parents in the human race [were] the man named Adam and woman [was] named Eve.

Adam had a great fall and he received a terrible bump; involved with him in the catastrophe was Eve, his wife. Then, when they tried to shake the fog out of their minds, looking at each other, they realized that they no longer knew who they were, and they did not know why they were alive. They did not know the purpose for their existence.

Ever since that time, men and women alienated from God and trying to exist on a sick, fallen planet have been pleading, 'I don't even know why I was born!'

Those who have followed the revelation provided by the Creator God have accepted that God never does anything without purpose. We do believe, therefore, that God had a noble purpose in mind when He created us. We believe that it was distinctly the will of God that men and women created in His image would desire fellowship with Him above all else.

In His plan, it was to be a perfect fellowship based on adoring worship of the Creator and Sustainer of all things.¹

If we were born to worship, and if the modern era contributed to building a worship theology that leaves out most anything other than the mind, not to mention undervaluing the past, then one of our principal challenges is to create a new kind of worship that helps people rediscover why they were born and how they can engage the whole self in worship.

¹ A.W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship? A Call to True Worship* (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 1985), 49,51.

As we will see with issues relating to the theology of the church, the theology of worship has inherited some problems from the Enlightenment and its first generation offspring, the modern era.

Evangelical issues involving worship seem to be rooted in the conflict between the Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the nineteenth-century romantic stress on emotion. The emphasis on reason during the Enlightenment resulted in a heady form of worship. Worship assumed the nature of a lecture hall, where the primary emphasis was given to the sermon. This intellectual worship was challenged by revivalism...[which] clashed with the older worship, which was directed more toward the mind. One evangelical group located the meaning of worship in the shaping of the Christian mind; the other evangelical stream pointed to the meaning of worship in the experience of the heart. This conflict of style has continued in the twentieth-century debate about traditional versus contemporary worship. Traditional worship seems to be hanging onto modernity while contemporary worship has capitulated to pop culture. In either case the debate continues to rage about style with little concern for a biblical theology of worship.²

An accurate, biblical theology of worship has as its centerpiece the reenactment and recitation of God's saving acts and deeds throughout history and our relationship to him as a covenant people. The biblical basis for this truth is found, in part, in Deuteronomy 7:6, when God enters into a covenant relationship with Israel and they become "a people holy to the Lord, chosen to be his people." In the New Testament there is a new covenant, ratified by the blood of Christ, through which we the church enter into a unique relationship with him and become "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (I Peter 2:9).³

Another problem inherited from the Enlightenment and the modern era is a loss of understanding of the order of worship. The earliest description of New Testament worship is found in the book of Acts where, according to Luke, the early Christians

² Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 99.

³ All biblical references are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version.

“devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Worship is necessarily Christocentric because the very order of worship is to be found in Christ. Breaking of bread necessarily puts Jesus at the center of worship. “One of the most immediate consequences of recapturing worship as a telling and acting out of the Christian vision is the impact it makes on the order of worship. The rule of thumb is that this order, rooted in the living, dying, and rising of Christ, which it re-presents, is the vehicle through which the story of the word of Christ is proclaimed and enacted.”⁴

A final theological problem that must be corrected, and one alluded to above, is a loss of symbolic communication. The modern era was word dominated and based upon conceptual language. Modern notions about universal, scientific truth and the discovery of it through observation, analysis, logic, and reason left us with a form of communication that has little room for paradox, mystery, symbol, or image. Perhaps most interesting of all, it also left us with a dilemma about what to “do” with the Bible. Modernity taught that the Bible was the mind of God in written form and that an understanding of the written word leads to a relationship with Christ. One problem with this line of thinking is that God not only reveals himself through the word, but also through saving acts and deeds. If worship is a reenactment and recitation of God’s saving acts and deeds throughout history, symbolic communication has to be employed, for it is not possible to meaningfully reenact and recite without symbol.

This modern rejection of visual forms of communication resulted in the loss of the sacraments as ‘visual words.’ In evangelicalism the notion of a sacred presence through divine action is largely denied. In the desire to make Christianity as rational as possible and to steer clear of the rituals of the

⁴ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 104.

Catholic Church, we have denied the power of symbol to create and form the Christian community. For us truth resides in words, not images, symbols, and actions. Consequently, we have shifted baptism and Eucharist from God's action to human action. Baptism has become the means by which the converting person declares his or her faith (and I would add, joins the church); Lord's Supper has been reduced to an intellectual recall of Jesus hanging on the tree. We have reduced the ritual of water and of bread and wine to understandable actions. The mystery is gone.⁵

Considerations about the Church

This thesis maintains that we must restore a proper theology of the church, especially as it relates to story and symbol. This primary understanding is particularly important if the target students are going to learn about the ways the church appropriately engages the culture around it in a postmodern context.

In order to be effective in a postmodern world, it is necessary for evangelicals to deal with two specific [theological] problems inherited from the Enlightenment: (1) the emphasis on pragmatism, which has resulted in an a-theological understanding of the church; and (2) the emphasis on individualism, which has resulted in an a-historical view of the church. In the pragmatic view...the church as the body of Christ has been replaced by an efficient corporation. The pastor is the CEO and everyone else functions under the pastor's strong leadership.... A second theological view of the church is the model of the church as a political power base....

The second problem we have inherited from the Enlightenment is an a-historical attitude. Not all denominations and fellowships are equally a-historical. But for many, history is of little value. There is also a strong bias against the history preceding the Reformation.⁶

The idea that many churches have inherited or adopted an a-historical attitude goes to the heart of the issue of loss of memory and ties together some of the premises and assumptions upon which this thesis/project is built: Postmodern interest in the past, in story and in symbol, among other things, gives the church new opportunities to refresh and renew worship.

⁵ Ibid., 101.

⁶ Ibid., 75-76.

For theologian Ted Peters, the very definition of the church cannot be accurately set down apart from its story and its symbols. In Peters' systematic theology written from a proleptic point of view, the God of the future and his relationship with the church cannot begin to be understood until we recognize that he is also the God of the past. I want to suggest that if we can become more intentional about helping our congregations see this more full and more biblical picture of the church, it will change for the better our definition of the church and go a long way toward meeting postmodern needs:

The church is the historical arc between two terminals, Easter and the consummation. The church has been given the charge of bringing light to the world in this period while we await the full shining glory of God when even the sun will be surpassed in radiance. In the partial darkness of the present aeon, however, we must push on, following the path that the lamp of God's word illumines, a word made audible in the church's preaching, made visible in the celebration of the sacraments, and made tangible in the ministry of reconciling love....

We can identify the presence of the church when and where the story of Jesus is being told with its significance, that is, where the word of God is being proclaimed....

One of the problems Christians face today is that [the church's] metaphors and symbols are widely thought to be incongruous with the actual church that exists on the plane of world history.⁷

Peters seems to tie together the first two theological considerations of our present focus: worship and the church. I am struck by his assertion that the presence of the church may be identified by where and when the story of Jesus is told. He goes on to equate the telling of the story with the proclaiming of the word, but also indicates that the word is made visible and tangible, as well as audible. This profound, yet simple, truth signals a departure from the modern way of thinking about worship and the church. In the modern world, the church was more a place where, with an almost scientific attention to detail and efficiency, programs were offered, the word was thoughtfully considered,

⁷ Ted Peters, *God- The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 267, 269.

and there was a kind of disconnect between the act of worship and the church as an institution. Perhaps in a postmodern world more open to story and symbol, the connection between worship and the church may be fully restored.

Missiological Considerations

We have said that the purpose of the church is to worship. Now we turn to the theological context for how the church goes about its tasks.

In a recent London Times article titled “Christianity Almost Beaten Says Cardinal,” there appears a cartoon wherein a tourist couple gaze across a lawn toward a quaint, little English church. “It’s a shame really,” says the woman, “it would make a lovely shop.”

The article just below the cartoon begins as follows:

Christianity has almost been vanquished in Britain, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Conner told a gathering of priests yesterday. Christ was being replaced by music, New Age beliefs, the environmental movement, the occult, and the free-market economy,’ the Archbishop of Westminster said. . . [Said the Cardinal], ‘It does seem in our countries in Britain today, especially in England and Wales, that Christianity, as sort of a backdrop to people’s lives and moral decisions – and to the Government, the social life of the country – has now almost been vanquished.’⁸

I am intrigued with the phrase, “sort of a backdrop to people’s lives.” Backdrops are painted, one-dimensional illusions designed to fool the eye and make believable a faux world that exists only on stage. Perhaps it is no wonder that this kind of Christianity is one where Christ can be “replaced” by music or the free-market economy.

The church is either a cultural institution or it is an alternative community of faith. If it is a cultural institution, then it can survive even apart from what its members do or believe as long as the culture around it admits its presence. But if the church is an

⁸ Ruth Gledhill, “Christianity Almost Beaten Says Cardinal”, in *The London Times Online*, (Thursday, September 6, 2001). Available from <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0,,2-2001310271,00.html>.

alternative community of faith, then its survival depends upon what its members do or believe in the context of the culture around it. Community is built upon people and a healthy community of faith changes the lives of the people in it.

What we presently see happening with the church in England, both Roman and Anglican, provides us with a picture of how the missiology of the universal church is changing and how its leaders are responding. I have personal experience with the people and the culture of England: I lived there for nearly a year while finishing my undergraduate degree and, more recently, spent some time there visiting friends and attending a variety of churches. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Conner is correct in his observation about the country of England being a thoroughly secular one. Though I do not know it for certain, and perhaps he might not as well, what I suspect the Cardinal is lamenting has more to do with the disappearance of the modern way of thinking about church than with the disappearance of religion.

Not all of British theologians are in despair about the missiology of the church. Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester, is said by some commentators to be on the “short list” for filling the presently vacant seat of Archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of the Church of England. Nazir-Ali has written extensively on the biblical basis of the church, the cultural shift from modernity to postmodernity, and how this shift will change the nature of the church’s mission. After expounding upon some of the difficulties the church faces in the postmodern world, particularly those to be found in the dialectical tension between science and the metaphysical, he finds a way forward:

There is a dilemma here for the church, or is it a double opportunity? On the one hand, Christians believe that the *Logos* (the eternal Word), incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, is the rational principle that order the universe and provides it with coherence. They believe also that the *Logos* illumines all human beings (John 1:1-

18). They are not surprised, therefore, that there is a correspondence between the human mind and the world it wishes to observe... To put it simply, faith must have the consent of reason.

On the other hand, believers are only too aware that humans are finite creatures and cannot encompass all the mysteries of the universe, let alone the mystery of God's being. Belief in a transcendent source for the world's order may be logical but that does not reduce the transcendent itself to the merely logical. Christians are sympathetic, therefore, towards those who emphasize the wonder and mystery of the universe.

In other words, Christians can communicate with those who emphasize the importance of inquiry: scientific, historical or literary. At the same time, they have much in common with those who give priority to the 'beyondness' of the spiritual and the immediate impact it can make on us. Facing both ways, in this sense, will remain important for the mission of the church to come.⁹

What is the theological base for describing the missiological aims of the community of believers that is church? Robert Webber recognizes four dominant, biblical images of the church: the people of God, the new creation, the fellowship in faith, and the body of Christ.¹⁰

A proper theological basis for seeing the church as the people of God is found in the New Testament idea of *ecclesia*, the image of the church as "all the saints in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:1).

These people are the people of God; God creates, calls, sustains, and saves the church. The origin of the church lies, then, in the work of the redemption through Jesus Christ. Just as the origin of Israel is rooted in the exodus event so the church is grounded in the Christ event, the primordial event of the Christian faith. For this reason, the church is designated by words that compare it with Israel. The church is 'a chosen race,' 'a holy nation,' 'the true circumcision,' 'Abraham's sons,' 'heirs of David's throne,' 'a remnant,' and 'the elect.'¹¹

The people of God are his covenant representatives on earth and will therefore reach out and engage the communities in which they live.

⁹ Michael Nazir-Ali, *Shapes of the Church to Come* (Eastbourne, England: Kingsway, 2001), 25-26.

¹⁰ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The second image of the church, “the new creation,” shows how it is God’s earthly community. “It is the community in which a new start in life has begun. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17: ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [or the community] is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.’ This new creation has to be taken in both an individual and a corporate sense—a new person, a new community of people.”¹²

Christians are renewed – transformed – individually and corporately and will therefore reach out and engage the communities in which they live.

Theological support for the third and perhaps the most important image as it relates to missiology, “the fellowship in faith,” may be found in the early church. Scripture tells us, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... All who believed were together and had all things in common... Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people” (Acts 2:42-47). The church – God’s church, God’s new creation – shares a corporate life. For example, Luke describes the early Christians as being of “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32) even going so far as to sell their personal possessions and live in physical community.

Living together was not easy, and the principles of being the church together had to be learned as each member of the community submitted to the rule of Christ. But faith in the end was to overcome the boundaries that separated people, transcending racial, economic, and sexual differences. ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female’ (Galatians 3:28). The character of the ‘fellowship in faith’ is to be far different from the character of other communities.¹³

¹² Ibid., 79.

¹³ Ibid., 80.

It is deeply biblical for the church to be communitarian. Stanley Grenz maintains that the concept is primal and finds its roots in the Godhead. "...A theology that is truly trinitarian will also be completely communitarian. We maintain that theology, with its trinitarian structure, finds its integration through the concept of community. Community forms the theme that integrates the various strands of theological reflection into a single web or mosaic."¹⁴

Healthy communities of faith will, out of a desire for extending its own community, reach out and engage the larger community in which it is located.

The fourth image, "the body of Christ," has its theological support in the writings of Paul. The picture of the body makes clear that the church – God's church, God's new creation that shares a corporate life – is a physical body of people

who truly are the continuation of the presence of Christ in the world. In Paul 'the body of Christ' is understood as antithetical to the 'body of death.' This contrast is expressed in Romans 5:12-21, a recapitulation passage. Here, there are two humanities: those who stand in solidarity with Adam and constitute the body of death, and those who stand in solidarity with Christ and constitute the body of life. Paul's reference to the church as the body of Christ is therefore not a mere metaphor containing social and psychological value, but a statement about the relationship that exists between Christ and his body. It says that Christ is one with the church, that the existence of the church is an essential continuation of the life of Jesus in the world; the church is a divine creation which, in a mystical yet real way, coinheres with the Son who is made present through it.¹⁵

If Christ is indeed the head of the body of believers, its members will, out of obedience to the head, reach out and engage the community in which they live.

Each of the biblical images of the church, the people of God, the new creation, the fellowship in faith, and the body of Christ, have at least one unifying feature: community.

¹⁴ Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: WJK, 1996), 204.

¹⁵ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 81.

As a church, we are bound together by the community of a shared spirit, by a shared faith, by a common covenant, a common cup, and to a communitarian God, who is by very nature of the Trinity, a community in and of himself.

Concluding Thoughts

Today there is a great deal of debate in the church about the nature of its true mission. I cannot think of a single denomination not struggling to some degree with how to be a more effective church in changing times. In my own denomination, the arguments have been passionate and, frankly, sometimes angry. My observations suggest that worship is the place where these tensions are most apparent. Marva Dawn would agree:

Music often becomes the scapegoat after pastors have failed for years to train congregation members to evangelize in their daily lives. ...[M]ost conversions are the result of friendships, not worship style – but if reaching out has not occurred over the years, sometimes churches suddenly switch music and worship styles in order to ‘attract’ people. The music of the faithful Church is jettisoned to compensate for long-term failure to be the Church, inviting unbelievers by friendship and by active Christian life.¹⁶

While worship may be the place where symptoms of this tension are most evident, I suspect that its root may be found in the debate about the difference between the purpose and the tasks of the church and what, if any, priority one should be given over the others. When things seem to be going well in a church the tension is less apparent, but when church members (leaders especially) sense that “things are going down hill,” a slow but rising crescendo of worry causes them to find most anything on which to pin the blame. Worship, it seems to me, is the first place they tend to look.

¹⁶ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 166.

In this critical time when churches are rapidly decreasing in numbers and influence, how should Christian communities respond? For many, the answer has been to change their worship style, but this is not enough, unless a congregation's entire ethos is changed in the process. In fact, the opposite is often the case, for the new worship styles of many parishes focus inward and on the individual instead of outward for the world's sake. Then members and visitors only ask what worship means for them and what they can get out of it. Arthur Just asserts that this 'has serious ramifications not only for our liturgiology and ecclesiology, but for our missiology as well.' Outreach programs will continue to fail because, if 'the vision of the worshiper is inward and the goal educational, then it is almost impossible to shape an evangelical vision for the church that is outward and transforming.' Our worship should cause us to ask instead, Who is God? How does God want to use me and the community to which I belong for his purposes in the world? How does worship form us to be God's people for this place and time?¹⁷

This thesis/project maintains that perhaps the most productive and meaningful way forward for the postmodern church will be to look back to the ancient church. Why should we look to the model of the early church over that of any other era?

The Church, in the Western world, faces populations who are increasingly 'secular' – people with no Christian memory, who don't know what we Christians are talking about. These populations are increasingly 'urban' – and out of touch with God's 'natural revelation.' These populations are increasingly 'postmodern'; they have graduated from Enlightenment ideology and are more peer driven, feeling driven, and 'right-brained' than their forebears. These populations are increasingly 'neo-barbarian'; they lack 'refinement' or 'class,' and their lives are often out of control. These populations are increasingly receptive – exploring worldview options from Astrology to Zen – and are often looking 'in all the wrong places' to make sense of their lives and find their soul's true home.

In the face of this changing Western culture, many Western Church leaders are in denial; they play and do church as though next year will be 1957. Furthermore, most of the Western Church leaders who are not in denial do not know how to engage the epidemic numbers of secular, postmodern, neo-barbarians outside (and inside) their churches....

Most Western Church leaders would never guess that ancient...Christianity could show the way today for two reasons. First, they assume that no expression of ancient Christianity could be relevant to the challenges we now face. Second, they assume that the only useful stream of insight is, by definition, confined to Roman Christianity and its Reformation offshoots.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., 295.

¹⁸ George G. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 9-10.

The Church Fathers arduously worked out the details of the faith – they “hammered out their theology,” as Webber puts it – in the context of polytheism, Gnosticism, cults, and mystery religions. Consider these truths: 1) The Fathers summarized the general doctrines of the faith in creedal form. 2) The early church had a significant role in the development of the canon of Scripture. 3) The creeds, which are “models of theological thought and methodological inquiry,” gave definition to a trinitarian concept of God and to the dual nature of Christ. 4) The ancient church provided foundational thought on ecclesiology, ministry, and the sacraments. 5) The early church helped shape our ethical response to social concerns. 6) The early church “wrestled” with its worship at the same time it was crafting the creeds, canon, and ethics.¹⁹

It is clear that the early church has defined the theological issues and established the framework or the ‘rules’ in which the church does its theological reflection. Anyone who defends the canon, subscribes to the Apostle’s Creed, advocates the Trinity, or adheres to the full humanity and divinity of Jesus is already affirming essential aspects of classical Christianity. Evangelicals already have a commitment to historic Christianity and only need to be reminded what that means. The work of the early church Fathers represents foundational Christian thought, which has been the subject of interpretation, reinterpretation, and debate throughout the history of the Christian church. The importance of the Fathers is crucial to every epoch of the faith. Therefore, no Christian dares wrestle with postmodern thought until she or he has studied classical Christian thought. To give special attention to the period of classical Christian thought is to be orthodox, evangelical, and ecumenical. Novel ideas of the faith will come and go, but the classical Christian tradition will endure.

Thus the primary reason to return to the Christian tradition is because it is truth that has the power to speak to a postmodern world. Early Christian teaching is simple, uncluttered, it cuts through the complexities of culturized Christianity and allows what is primary and essential to surface.

Furthermore, the classical tradition is sorely needed because so many people have come to the end of their patience with the modern version of evangelical faith and with current innovations that have no connection with the past...

Retelling the Christian tradition also accents what is common in the faith. It refuses to condone divisiveness between churches based on differences in secondary

¹⁹ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 28.

theological issues. What is truly important are those truths the universal church holds in common.²⁰

There is monumental change occurring in worship across our country as we leave the modern era behind and move forward into that unknown element called “postmodern.” An apt metaphor for the change, I think, is the collision of two great landmasses on a geographic scale: there will be friction, there might be some earthquakes – perhaps even some fire – but in the end, the steady push of the “new” will make its mark and change the landscape forever. But perhaps the “new” is not that new after all. The modern, with its emphasis on intellect and the word, is slowly but surely being overrun by the postmodern, with its emphasis on experience and story and symbol. Many postmodern worshipers, especially youth, are turning to inspiration to the colorful patterns and language of the ancient church. There they are rediscovering classic Christianity and learning to draw strength and spirituality from a deep, satisfying well of time-tested truth and tradition. The postmodern world need not frighten us, for many of its thirsts can be marvelously and even uniquely quenched at that well. Our purpose as a church is to worship our unchanging God. Our tasks as Christians include offering a cup of living water to a thirsty world.

²⁰ Ibid., 29.