

# **Apologetics and Transformation**

*Explore the transformative function of apologetics in postmodern society. Your essay should include key ways in which today's context is different from other historical periods, the contemporary challenges and suggestions for transformative action.*

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## 1 Introduction: Postmodern Apologetics?

The Church has employed different techniques of ‘thoughtful interaction of Christian faith with contemporary teachings and ideologies’<sup>1</sup> and justified different beliefs in many ways over its lifetime. In every era, Christians modify their apologetic behaviour to suit their own context.

There is a broad debate over the era we find ourselves in now. Some enthusiastically advocate postmodernity as a description, while others prefer to emphasise the continuities over the differences with modernity. Those analysts might use descriptions like ‘late modernity’,<sup>2</sup> ‘late capitalism’<sup>3</sup> or ‘liquid modernity’.<sup>4</sup> What seems beyond question is that a cultural shift is taking place, fuelled by technological development and the ‘shrinking’ of the world. The way we work has changed, the way we buy and sell, the way we consume media – even the way we maintain friendships is changing beyond recognition.

In addition to the debate over the existence of postmodernity, there has been a wide spectrum of Christian responses to postmodernity and in particular postmodern philosophy. We will briefly discuss the various postures towards postmodernity, but in this paper we will largely assume that it both exists and is something that we can no more hold back than the tide. As it submerges us, we must think carefully about how we justify our faith, to reason carefully on both the message and media we will use to communicate.

It would have been easy to follow a very modern, encyclopedic approach to the definitions of and historical descent of postmodernity in this paper. This method has been followed by some who describe postmodernity<sup>5</sup> but it seems unsuitable. Instead, this paper employs maxims to express responses to the postmodern era in order to avoid the trap of surface postmodernism.<sup>6</sup> To authentically transform our apologetics, we must first authentically engage with our postmodern era.

## 2 What’s so special about now?

It is impossible to engage with postmodernity without thinking a little about what it comes after – modernity. An examination of the relationship between the two, reveals that postmodernism neither springs from nowhere, nor simply refutes everything that modernism stood for. Leithart has suggested that the actions of postmodernity can be described as ‘intensifications, inversions and unmaskings’<sup>7</sup> of modernity.

### 2.1 Intensifications

Intensifications suggests that postmodernity is in many senses a ‘hyper-modernity’. One example is in the technological progress and control of the planet that seems to be exponentially increasing. Postmoderns

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1 Pohlmann, ‘Apologetics’, 102.

2 Giddens, *Identity*, 3.

3 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 53.

4 Bauman, *Liquid*, 25.

5 E.g., Leithart, *Solomon*, 19-43 starts with the Renaissance; Raschke, *Reformation*, 35-48 moves from Kant to Postmodern philosophers; Tickle, *Emergence*, 77-117 covers the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

6 Leithart, *Solomon*, 36.

7 Leithart, *Solomon*, 39.

take technology for granted; television is ubiquitous in the industrial world while even in the poorest African countries, mobile phones are to be found everywhere. But twenty-first century technology is far from limited to electronics. Chinese authorities planned to use cloud-seeding to prevent rain disrupting the Olympic opening ceremonies and sporting events. Genetic research has progressed at an astonishing rate, changing the process of breeding the best crops and animals for farms from a stock-yard setting to the lab. Despite limits set by ethical oversight bodies, cloning is old news and the secrets of the human genome are opening up one at a time. Individuals are able to get their entire genome scanned, though at a high cost, and entrepreneurs plan on making the service available to all at an affordable cost.

## 2.2 Inversions

Inversions show how the postmodern world subverts the dreams of modernity. Postmoderns do not share the confidence of moderns in the absolute certainty of Truth. The modern era was defined by the creation of nation states, with clear boundaries, yet the relentless progress of globalism means that international borders become less and less meaningful as trades happen in microseconds over networked computers half a world apart and workers collaborate on video screens.<sup>8</sup> Yet even this inverts itself, as Google and Facebook bring information and friends from anywhere onto your screen, technology start-ups recognise that 'local' is the next boundary. In a world where news from any continent is a click away, we are looking for ways to find people, news and services in our immediate vicinity. Technology companies are often small, responding nimbly to the rapid pace of developments and desires, inverting the factory of modernity. The multinational company is still a part of the landscape that we can't imagine ever moving, yet companies like Google, Microsoft and Apple depose mighty giants like IBM.

## 2.3 Unmaskings

Unmaskings reveal the hidden darkness in some of the agendas of modernity. The grand schemes of modernity have, one by one, seemed to fail as they were led to their logical conclusion. For this reason, some would mark the implosion of Communism with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 as the start of postmodernity.<sup>9</sup> The emptiness of these huge systems has come as a surprise to some. Modernism attempted to re-form the world in our own image through colonialism up to the twentieth century and in the coups and wars between 'the west' and communism. Postmoderns unmask this attempt as a power play and highlight the oppression, violence and injustice endemic to it. The 'curtain of glass and steel' of modern architecture used for homes and workplaces on every continent has been unmasked as a hollow attempt at 'Universal Truth'.<sup>10</sup> Postmodern architecture aims to match form and purpose, using cues from location and surrounding buildings; not to copy or regress to previous eras but playfully engage with a variety of sources.

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8 Leithouse, *Solomon*, 45.

9 Smith, *Postmodernism*, 19.

10 Leithart, *Solomon*, 54.

### 3 Postmodern Values

Cataloguing postmodern philosophy would be a very challenging task, not to mention ironically charged, as it is a very amorphous and disparate collection of ideas that, sometimes deliberately, defy categorisation. However, Brian McLaren draws out from a passage of Crichton's 'The Lost World' four values that postmoderns usually cherish.

1. Postmodernism is sceptical of certainty.
2. Postmodernism is sensitive to context.
3. Postmodernism highly values subjective experience.
4. For postmoderns, togetherness is a rare, precious, and elusive experience.<sup>11</sup>

These values are seen by some Christians as challenges to faith.

#### 3.1 Certainty

Certainty in the modern world is based on scientific theories. The rediscovery of linear perspective meant that art could go beyond symbolic representation to realistically depict a tableau or event. 'Renaissance Men' like Leonardo da Vinci sought realistic depiction not just in artwork but also in their science. Symbols were not enough, they wanted to see the 'real'. But postmodernism recognises that however sophisticated the brushwork or language or mathematical formula, any depiction is symbolism. Crichton's character, Doc Thorne, describes theories as fantasies that change.<sup>12</sup> As the modern age has progressed, one theory has replaced the last in an attempt to get closer to the truth, but postmodernism says that certain knowledge of a true theory would be difficult, if not impossible to prove.

Derrida famously said that '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*', 'there is no outside-text',<sup>13</sup> hinting that all we can do in describing the world is text – not necessarily written down, but framed as words, and our commentary on what we think is more text, and text-on-text. Certainty is seen as an illusion and an arrogant one at that. McLaren goes on to argue that it is not 'truth' that postmoderns are opposed to or afraid of, but 'certainty'.<sup>14</sup>

This suspicion of certainty has been given voice in Lyotard's definition of postmodernity as 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.<sup>15</sup> These *grands recits*, or 'big stories' aim to place everyone or everything within one singular, universal scheme.

Christianity cannot pretend that there is not a grand story played out in the Bible – indeed, it is much more helpful to look at scripture in this way than the modern caricature of a textbook. We must, however, inspect it for the violence that the 'totalising metanarratives' that characterise the stories that postmodernity rejects.

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11 McLaren, *Church*, 162-164. An extra value, *Postmodernism leans towards the humorous*, is not included in newer editions and is not used here.

12 McLaren, *Church*, 161.

13 Derrida, *Grammatology*, 158, see also Smith, *Postmodernism*, 23.

14 McLaren, *Church*, 166.

15 Lyotard, *Postmodern*, 60.

Middleton and Walsh discern an ‘antitotalizing’ stream to the story of scripture, which can ‘delegitimize and subvert violent, totalizing uses of the story’<sup>16</sup> The stance of the writers of scripture shows a concern with absence, pain and the oppressed in the heart of God, breaking down simplistic, exploitative readings of Scripture.

### 3.2 Context

Context is essential to postmoderns, for our theories are shaped profoundly by where we form them, and with whom. Theories themselves are not the problem, for we all operate with theories, but it is important to recognise the way that the theories are culture bound. We have already thought how architecture values context highly, that each place deserves a unique and different building to another place. But context is important in many branches of postmodern thought from art to political theory.

The biggest fear of modernists when confronted with this is that it could lead to radical ethical relativism, where someone might argue that their context allows them to define wrong as right and vice versa. McLaren says that ‘in my experience, however, most postmoderns are not really this radical, although they may quickly sound that way when goaded by insensitive Christians castigating them for the abandonment of “absolutes.”’<sup>17</sup> As he goes on to argue, postmoderns really do not want to see theories wielded as weapons of power to divide. Each context is a place or setting for different knowledge and starting points, or ‘presuppositions’, as knowledge is ‘not an individual matter, but a group experience’.<sup>18</sup> By recognising our own context we are more prepared to accept that things will look different in other contexts.

### 3.3 Experience

Experience or ‘being’ is something postmoderns can take hold of, but it is not to be mistaken for the Truth of modernism re-framed.<sup>19</sup> Although subjective and obviously provisional, experience is what we have and for postmoderns, to claim to have more is invalid. We should just enjoy the experience for what it is, just an experience. Likewise, we should recognise our theories for what they are, as we discussed above. Language, or ‘text’, is insufficient to encompass the depth and broadness and colour of all the experience one single person can have, and there are more than six billion of us experiencing all time.

### 3.4 Togetherness

The postmodern desire for togetherness ‘inspires the oft-heard postmodern motifs of pluralism and tolerance’.<sup>20</sup> McLaren argues that this desire in part comes from a weariness with the argumentative nature of modernity. From democratic politics to philosophical debates, modernity is rife with ‘us vs them’ divisions, with each side believing they are absolutely right. Postmodernism appeals for shared experience which engenders togetherness. The togetherness of multicultural communities changes opinions and fears

16 Middleton, ‘Scalpel’, 141-142.

17 McLaren, *Church*, 166.

18 McLaren, *Church*, 167.

19 McLaren, *Church*, 164.

20 McLaren, *Church*, 164.

of 'the other', challenging world views and developing pluralism and tolerance. Of course, these values can be taken too far, and those who try to adapt them into modern perspectives may end up distorting them into the self-refuting absurdities. As we have discussed, few postmoderns really believe in radical relativism, still fewer try to live by it; most are really trying to say something much more interesting and profound when they appear to affirm it.

#### 4 Paradigms for Postmodern Apologetics

How then might we practice apologetics in this context? Three positions are articulated by Phillips and Okholm.<sup>21</sup> Firstly we may condemn all that postmodernism stands for. This approach may affirm the faith of the moderns in our churches and may convince some moderns who do not believe, but as a strategy for engaging the contemporary world it falls far short. Postmoderns will not hear this kind of criticism, it merely confirms their suspicion that Christians have no part in the ongoing conversation they want to progress.

A second position is to affirm some parts of postmodernity while taking other things from modernity. Christians in this camp suggest that they are neither moderns or postmoderns, that they have a different world view not bound to non-Christian philosophies and are plundering the Egyptians.<sup>22</sup> This runs a risk of demonstrating only a surface understanding of postmodernism and a misunderstanding or lack of real engagement with the questions that are being raised.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, there are those who accept that they live in an increasingly postmodern world and seek to engage with it on its own terms. We must acknowledge that not all that postmodernism brings to the table is positive and useful, but it is the medium in which postmoderns move. Imagine asking a fish about water. You might imagine her to be an expert in it, yet her experience is different to ours. Water is all she knows; it's all around her; it's not special or exotic. Air, on the other hand, is a dangerous place; she must be very careful of it.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, being at home in postmodernity is very different to being at home in modernity, and it is very easy to misunderstand what it is like in the other environment.

This paper seeks to outline helpful paradigms of engagement in a postmodern climate. While they are probably leanings that would not have been meaningful or appropriate in dialogue with modernity, postmoderns may feel much more at home under their influence. By nature this list cannot be exhaustive or exclusive, rather it seeks to ask questions that help us to look 'between the words' of our current practice to find the spaces where new conversations can be born.

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21 Phillips, *Postmodern*, 15-21.

22 See Augustine, *Doctrina*, 125-31.

23 Lakies, 'Misread', 1-9.

24 McLaren, *Church*, 159.

#### 4.1 Uncertainty

*Embrace uncertainty to profoundly encounter God.*

We have already discussed how postmoderns are not against truth, but certainty. Certainty and rigour have been hallmarks of modern Christianity and will be a difficult addiction to give up. However, we must not delude ourselves into thinking that the only way to engage with Christianity in an orthodox manner is in certainty of absolute Truth. Following God has always thrown up questions over the presence and absence of God. Indeed, theophany is one of the oldest and toughest apologetic questions. Yet speak to a believer who has come through suffering and you will find someone who has dealt with absence and presence and it has reinforced their faith. Rollins shares the image of waiting in a café for your beloved – until he arrives, he is absent from everyone in the room, but somehow that absence is present only with you.<sup>25</sup> While a believer waits for God, he is absent, yet we feel his absent reality profoundly. A postmodern Christian is a seeker, never one who has found, for we keep seeking out the presence of God while deeply experiencing absence.

It is not only in absence that we find the uncertainty of knowing God. In honestly examining our concepts of god, we find deficiency, and rightly so. In the ‘critique of ideology’, we recognise that an ideology, a description of how we think things are can become an idol to us. The Greek word *eidos* is at the heart of both words; it means the essence of a thing. When our ideology of God is what we worship we have replaced God with a god of our own making, an idol. When we recognise that our image of God is far inferior to His reality, we start to realise that our uncertainty about God is the proper response to Him, for in our certainty we have certainly misapprehended Him.<sup>26</sup>

God is much more than our concept or teaching or beliefs of Him. Rollins uses the word ‘hypernymity’ to describe the transcendence of God and how he overwhelms any possibility of comprehension. If anonymity gives too little information to understand a person, hypernymity is too much - ‘instead of being limited by the poverty of absence, we are short-circuited by the excess of presence’.<sup>27</sup> This brings together the ideas of transcendence and immanence, so often polarised as opposites by Christian communities – rather than God’s immanence reducing His transcendence to make a ‘small god’, it is immanence that proves His transcendence in blowing our minds. This un/known God is the divine mystery of revelation and concealment.

We have discussed that it is not practical to embrace the radical kind of postmodernism that denies any kind of knowledge, but rather affirmed that knowledge is context bound and provisional. Therefore we can say ‘I believe God is true, but what I believe about God may not be completely true’.<sup>28</sup> Our finite knowledge of the infinite is by definition flawed and with Job we must confess our insignificance and repent of our claims to rights and righteousness (Job 42:1-6).

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25 Rollins, *Speak*, 82.

26 Rollins, *Speak*, 10-12.

27 Rollins, *Speak*, 24.

28 McLaren, *Church*, 172-3.



So, far from being a position of weakness to be despised with the modern mind, to the postmodern, uncertainty is the position of humility where we can really begin to appreciate God. We must be very careful not to worship our singular concept of God when He is so much more and in humble conversation with others, acknowledge that we cannot contain God in description. Paul wrote ‘now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.’ (1 Cor 13:12, ESV) and it seems unlikely that he spoke of the modern era of full knowing.<sup>29</sup>

An apologetic of uncertainty looks very different to a rigid apologetic of certainty. It will not be combative – we can no more defend God than defend a lion.<sup>30</sup> Rather, we must ‘turn Him loose’ from the confines of our dogmatism and allow real engagement with a living, transcendent being. We will continue to explore how that might happen in conversation, story and celebration.

## 4.2 Conversation

*Engage in two-way conversation where both parties grow.*

Much is made in the postmodern age of ‘dialogue’. Very often it can be reduced to me thinking what to say next while someone else talks, rather than a genuine conversation. Dialogue is valued highly by postmoderns when it is an experience that fosters togetherness, but when it is approached in a coercive or combative manner, shutters will come down. We have seen the suspicion that postmoderns hold towards certainty or being told what to think. Pretending to dialogue when really attempting to preach is a deception.

Conversation will begin with questions. We must earn the right to both ask questions and respond to the questions of others. McLaren describes a lecture on the existence of God that he gave to Chinese scholars visiting the US. Rather than a set of proofs, he describes providing a series of questions a person would need to think through in searching for God’s existence, and presenting possible answers in a ‘tree diagram’. The response of the listeners was gratitude that he had treated them with respect and not attempted to push them into believing.<sup>31</sup>

Postmoderns realise that knowledge is based on faith, on choosing what to think, but they need to see both credibility and plausibility.<sup>32</sup> Credibility implies an intellectual rigour, a depth and interconnectedness, a coherence. Plausibility describes a belief’s almost aesthetic beauty, an appeal to emotion and a social, practical outworking. In our conversations we must be confident to present both credibility and plausibility, but know when each is required. To stress one over the other or at the wrong time, in the wrong way may make us look very disconnected.<sup>33</sup>

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29 See McLaren, *Church*, 172.

30 See Spurgeon, *Gold*, 137, speaking of the Bible.

31 McLaren, *Church*, 73-74.

32 Stackhouse, ‘Argument’, 48-49.

33 McLaren, *Church*, 79-80.

We must also accept the searching questions aimed at us and engage with them honestly. We may need to engage in an apologetic of repentance, one which acknowledges the failures of our forebears and describes the reasons that we can reject traditions that lead us away from God while affirming the tradition that connects us to Him. For example, in the past, the Church validated slavery and promoted cultural imperialism throughout the colonial period. While the Church has a very different stance now and has rejected much of its violent past, repentance may still be appropriate.

A postmodern conversation based apologetic may look something like the ‘Evangelism Project’ that Rollins describes. Members of his Christian community visit other religious groups and Christian denominations to experience their alien beliefs and practices. The aim is not to be ‘converted’ to another belief system or even to break down the differences between beliefs. It is the more difficult process of seeing ourselves from a new perspective, through their eyes. Experiencing the tension of different beliefs allows us to explore the fracture in our own beliefs, learn more about ourselves and discover the tension and mystery inherent in our own beliefs.<sup>34</sup> In one sense, a project like this is an apologetic in itself – it puts the lie to the idea that Christians are closed and refuse to listen. Whether our conversations form part of a formal ‘interfaith dialogue’ or a personal relationship, we refute in word and practice the idea that Christians see others only as potential converts.

Meeting with and talking to people who are ‘other’ and different is the only way we can explore the issues in our own faith that we would otherwise not be able to see. We may use that insight to reform ourselves or respond more clearly in apologetics to others. We may not use the conversation at all; we should be comfortable with the idea that a conversation is an experience that has value in itself, no result is required to validate it.

### 4.3 Stories

*Tell and be part of stories that connect, engage and encourage further development.*

The modern era thought it had outgrown the stories of pre-modernity, like fairy-tales of childhood. Preferring to employ propositional truth, modern Christians thought of the Bible as a textbook or a legal casebook to be quoted from to prove a point. Postmoderns are comfortable with *petits recits*: local, individual stories that they can identify with, engendering togetherness. Sharing our personal story can be sensitive and unnerving, but it engenders respect, intimacy and leaves freedom for multiple interpretations and meanings.<sup>35</sup>

As discussed above, the grand story of scripture does not have to be a narrative that does violence to the hearer. We must be sensitive to the concerns of postmodernity, especially when handling stories that have been used for violence in the past. In the modern age, *exegesis* has been our primary way of engaging with scripture. In the postmodern, we must also be prepared to use *eisegesis* too. Reading ourselves into scripture

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<sup>34</sup> Rollins, *Speak*, 53-4.

<sup>35</sup> Sire, ‘Fool’, 120.

has been thought of as dangerous and wrong, but especially in the context of story, it allows us to take the places of those who have experienced God before us and learn from those experiences. It allows us to play with the stories themselves, imagining new and dangerous happenings, stretching our concepts of God and seeking Him.

Jesus used story in ways that were at once quite familiar and also dangerous in his context. He took and re-framed stories that were around, that his listeners might have heard before, but changed them to make the point he wanted to.<sup>36</sup> He spoke extensively in riddle and mysterious parables, and his recorded explanations for parables were enigmatic, too. Modern Christians often sought to find ‘the’ meaning of a parable using some kind of correspondence technique. Postmoderns embrace the ambiguity and are prepared to find themselves in the story. In this way, ancient traditions and ceremonies are at home in postmodern times. In the Jewish Passover celebration, participants find themselves in the story of God’s action - ‘we were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt and the Lord our God brought us out...’<sup>37</sup> (see also Deu 6:21). So too in communion, we are in a story where Jesus’ body and blood are offered on our behalf and we consume them.

Stories are not a dismissive or aggressive apologetic. While that tone may have worked in previous age to draw ‘nominal’ Christians back to the faith they had left, in our postmodern world, anything that sounds forced or forcing will be left unheard. Many of the ‘big questions’ or key topics of apologetics spring from personal questions and issues that people are experiencing. In that context a fixed, certain answer is less helpful than a conversation, listening to their questions and story, and sharing our own. Stories and parables are a way of speaking truth that goes beyond the rigidity of propositional truth – the parable can ‘change our world – breaking it open to ever-new possibilities by refusing to be held by the categories that currently exist within that world.’<sup>38</sup>

An apologetic of story goes beyond telling tales that capture imagination, it also calls for us to take part in stories. We need to be prepared to step in and be in the stories of those who question us. When confronted with and questioned about the suffering of a blind man, Jesus looked for no other answer than to demonstrate God’s power and action by intervening (John 9:1-7). With sensitivity, we may need to go beyond the direct questions of apologetics to answer by our lives, weaving their story together with ours and God’s.

#### **4.4 Celebration**

*Celebrate God’s presence with anyone who will join you.*

Celebration is an ancient tradition of the Christian church. In the modern world, services were endured or done to the congregation. As we enter the postmodern world there are two tendencies or directions that the meeting together of Christians are following.

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<sup>36</sup> Sire, ‘Fool’, 123.

<sup>37</sup> Shahn, *Haggadah*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Rollins, *Heretic*, xi.

The first is that of larger and larger groups. The US has witnessed the growth of the ‘Mega Church’ and some major cities in the UK have seen increasingly large churches. Big services with high production values mirror the media consumption that the congregation are used to at home. Polished musical performances are supplemented with the use of video, drama and the polish of an expensive concert or conference.

The second goes in the opposite direction – smaller groups. The ‘Cell Church’ is a model where the impersonality of big Sunday worship events is offset by small groups meeting in the week. While some have seen this as a return to New Testament principles, others see that it perfectly fits the postmodern age. Small groups mean that there is possibility of questioning and uncertainty without shaking the entire church, and conversation and stories can be shared without the barrier of standing on a big stage.

Small groups are not just a part of big cell churches, but are appearing in coffee shops, pubs and reading groups. This ‘emerging church’ movement allows people to explore faith in a context that they feel comfortable in. They form small communities where they feel togetherness and can express their faith with others that they feel understand their point of view.

The emerging church movement is very postmodern in its syncretism of disparate traditions in its worship. A service might take something from the re-discovery of Celtic Christianity, with elements from the Eastern Orthodox and charismatic worship as well as the Reformed tradition. Tradition is not used for the sake of conservatism or staying the same, but rather as a tried and proved way of engaging with God. Postmodernity relishes humour and irony. The music, art, drama and film of postmodernity takes old media and stories, ‘remixing’ and ‘mashing up’ until something new is created.

The relevance of celebration to the transformation of apologetics is in the Church being an apologetic.<sup>39</sup> In welcoming others into our celebrations with the room for conversation and uncertainty we allow them to meet with God for themselves and be transformed. By integrating those who look to Christianity for answers into the ongoing story of our communities, we demonstrate in action the truth of the gospel – as Schaeffer put it, ‘Christian apologetics must be able to show intellectually that Christianity speaks of true truth; but it must also exhibit that it is not just a theory.’<sup>40</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

We have explored how apologetics might be transformed to communicate more effectively in the postmodern world. By emphasising the ancient position within the Judaeo-Christian tradition that many highly valued ideas within postmodernism have, we can have a position to speak into postmodern culture that was perhaps refused in the modern era. As Christian apologists explore uncertainty without losing themselves in relativism, we are in a position to bring new ideas into the conversation about truth. As we

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39 Hollinger, ‘Apologetic’, 187.

40 Schaeffer, *God*, 151.

are able to honestly take part in conversation, we have an opportunity to bring the story of Jesus to life in our communities and share the celebration of the paradox of resurrection authentically.

We have not yet explored how this postmodern apologetic will transform the society around us. It seems that the emerging church shows us that we do not yet see the dominant format of church for the next era.<sup>41</sup> However, in a time of fluidity, we can but pray for the Spirit to move on the face of the waters (Gen 1:2).<sup>42</sup>

*Word count: 4997*

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<sup>41</sup> Tickle, *Emergence*, 162-3.

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