

**SITUATING OURSELVES IN THE WORLD TODAY**

**A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

**FROM THE MEDIAEVAL TO THE POST-MODERN**

just as we have personal histories  
that are layered  
by levels of personal development  
which become the foundations  
of later layers  
so too we have cultural layers  
which shape our present understanding  
of ourselves

WE LIVE IN WHAT IS CALLED A POST-MODERN WORLD  
IT IS THE WORLD AFTER THE MODERN ERA  
THE PRE-MODERN WORLD GAVE RISE TO THE MODERN  
OUR SENSIBILITIES ARE SHAPED BY THE LAYERS OF THAT  
MODERN AGE.

Renaissance	1500-1660
Enlightenment	1660-1789
Romanticism	1789-1835
Imperialism	1835-1914
Modernism	1914-1945

# TODAY WE LIVE IN THE TENSIONS BETWEEN MODERNISM AND POST-MODERNISM

pre-modern: the mediaeval and before

the modern age: Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Imperialism, Modernism

modernism: the end result of the modern age starting with the decline of the mediaeval world view and ending with the reality of world destruction by nuclear warfare.

modernism seeks to understand culture through a dominant ideology.

in the modernist era the struggle of empires -American, British, Chinese, Russian --  
and ideologies --communism, capitalism, psychology -- for dominance

post-modernism is the period after, characterised by conflicting narratives  
occupying the same cultural space

1945 -- to the present time

## 4 basic stances in contemporary culture

1. against the modern world,

i.e . against both post-modernism and modernism

2. for a form of modernism, and against the “chaos” of post-modernism

3. against any form of modernism, and a pragmatic acceptance of post-modernism

4. seeking to unite a structure of modernism with post-modern realities

# ANTI-MODERNISM + ANTI-POST-MODERNISM

## CHARACTERISTICS:

IDENTITY: THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY  
BASIC DISCERNMENT TECHNIQUE: AN APPEAL TO “A FIXED  
UNDERSTANDING” OF THE TRADITION  
STANCE: AUTHORITARIAN  
BEING IN THE WORLD: CONFORMITY

EXAMPLES: FUNDAMENTALISMS OF THE DAY; “OTHERNESS” AS THE ENEMY; LITERALISM AS HERMENEUTIC  
Integration as otherworldly

a nostalgia for a return to a pre-modern world

FOR MODERNISM; AGAINST POST-MODERNISM

## CHARACTERISTICS

IDENTITY: THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

DISCERNMENT TECHNIQUE: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

STANCE: RATIONAL DISCOURSE

BEING IN THE WORLD: IDEOLOGICAL

EXAMPLES: SCHOOLS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL; SOCIAL; ECOLOGICAL AS WAYS OF READING REALITY

continues the Enlightenment desire for a rational universe, the search for a unified theory of everything

integration as intellectual

# ANTI-MODERNISM + POST-MODERNISM

## CHARACTERISTICS

IDENTITY: THE SEARCH FOR LIBERTY  
DISCERNMENT TECHNIQUE: INTUITIVE  
STANCE: ECLECTIC  
BEING IN THE WORLD: PRAGMATIC

EXAMPLES: NEW-AGE SEEKERS; "I AM A SPIRITUAL PERSON, BUT NOT A RELIGIOUS ONE"

individualistic; fluid boundaries; realpolitik; power to  
maintain and establish self and its concerns; existentialist

integration as occasional and felt



# + MODERNISM + POST-MODERNISM

## CHARACTERISTICS

IDENTITY: A SENSE OF BELONGING  
DISCERNMENT TECHNIQUE: COLLEGIALLY  
STANCE: INTERSUBJECTIVITY  
BEING IN THE WORLD: GHETTO

EXAMPLES: SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS BASED ON IDEOLOGIES OF GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, CLASS, AGE, ECOLOGY

## IDEOLOGICALLY CONSTRUCTED RELATIONSHIPS

integration as communal

**romanticism**

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

### a: what cultural biases do we bring to direction?

e.g. Western type cultures the dominant model of sp. direction is the psychological:  
its language, its ethics, its techniques.

### b: how do we deal with otherness in direction?

n.b. the post-modern world is poly-valent, multi-cultural,...how do we  
respond to the concerns of cultural imperialism without losing our own  
integrity?

### C: HOW DO WE DEVELOP OUR INCARNATE SPIRITUALITY THAT IS SENSITIVE AND HELPFUL IN OUR CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT?

how do we dispose ourselves for a Pentecost experience?

(enlightenment is an accident; but techniques can make us accident prone)

# THREE STORIES

I. THE FRAGMENTED CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ON THE SURFACE IS A CONSERVATIVE SEMINARIAN WITH A GAY AFFECTIVE LIFE WHO HAS HIS CLIQUES HE IS OPEN TO BUT PICKS AND CHOOSES WHICH CHURCH DOCTRINES HE FOLLOWS IN HIS PRIVATE LIFE

A CERTAIN SCHOOL BOARD IN CANADA WHO HAS TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF SEX EDUCATION IN A SCHOOL DISTRICT. MEMBERS CANNOT COME TO A DECISION. THE DISCERNING POSITIONS: 1. LET'S ASK FATHER 2.. LET'S HAVE A MATURE DISCUSSION IN THE LIGHT OF THE RISE OF TEENAGE PREGNANCIES, SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES, AND PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN THE MODERN WORLD WE LIVE IN. 3. LET THE CLASSES BE OFFERED BUT LET ATTENDANCE BE OPTIONAL 4. AS CATHOLICS WE HAVE CERTAIN PRINCIPLES WHICH CANNOT BE ABROGATED BUT THERE ARE CLIQUES AROUND WHAT THOSE PRIMARY PRINCIPLES ARE.

A CHURCH ASSEMBLY HAS TO DECIDE ON THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN PRIESTS. THE POSITIONS TAKEN: 1. WHAT IS THE TRADITION 2. WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD TODAY 3. WE NEED TO REDRESS THE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN HOLDING POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH. 4. LET THE INDIVIDUAL BISHOPS DECIDE FOR HIS DIOCESE

## CLOSED MYTHS

- CLAIM TO BE A TOTAL AND VALID READING OF REALITY
- OFFERS SECURITY, STABILITY, ORDER, ESTABLISHMENT VALUES
  - SETS ITSELF UP AS THE FINAL AUTHORITY
  - MAINTAINS ITSELF BY VIOLENCE, POWER, CONTROL
  - DEMONIZES OTHERNESS
  - IS EXCLUSIVIST
  - BENEFITS A PRIVILEGED FEW
  - IS TOTALITARIAN
  - IS FUNDAMENTALIST

## BROKEN MYTHS

--SEEKS TO REPLACE CLOSED MYTHS  
WITH VARIATIONS OF THE CLOSED  
MYTH

-- USES THE SAME METHODS OF  
CONTROL AND POWER AS THE MYTHS IT  
ATTEMPTS TO OVERTHROW

--MANIFESTS ITSELF IN FORMS OF  
UTOPIANISM OR NOSTALGIA

## OPEN MYTHS

-- USING THE GAPS INHERENT IN CLOSED AND BROKEN MYTHS

--ALLOWS THE FUTURE TO BEAR IN ON THE PRESENT AND THE PAST

EXPERIENCED AS A LEANING INTO THE DARKNESS, AS THE CONSTANT DESIRE FOR SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

--IS MAINTAINED THROUGH A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIVINE

--SEES BEING HUMAN AS A PILGRIM STATE

WAITING ON THE FATHER

18 YEARS BETWEEN FINDING IN THE TEMPLE AND THE BAPTISM

THE TEMPTATIONS IN THE DESERT

PETER'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WAITING TO RETURN LAZARUS TO LIFE

AGONY IN THE GARDEN

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

JESUS GIVES UP HIS SECURITY, MEANING, SENSE OF BELONGING, FREEDOM

HOW WE WAIT ON THE FATHER

ANNUNCIATION COMES TO US  
THE NATIVITY COMES TO US  
PETER'S DISCERNMENT ABOUT JESUS COMES TO HIM  
RESURRECTED JESUS COMES TO US  
PENTECOST COMES TO US  
THE ESCHATON COMES TO US

HOW DO WE DISPOSE OURSELVES TO SEE WHAT IS COMING TO US



WAITING ON THE FATHER: LIVING THE OPEN MYTH

BEYOND PROFESSIONALISM TO THE PROPHETIC

BEYOND INSTITUTION TO COMMUNITY

BEYOND TOLERANCE TO HOSPITALITY

ROOTED IN AN LIVED INTIMACY WITH GOD

GRACE: AN INTIMACY WITH GOD , OUT OF WHICH  
FLOWS LOVE, AND OUT OF WHICH FLOWS  
DISCERNMENT OUT OF WHICH FLOWS SERVICE

SOME OBSERVATIONS

1. WE ARE STILL BEING CREATED

2. DISCERNMENT CARRIES ON THE WORK OF CREATION; GOD CARRIES ON THE WORK OF RESURRECTION

3. DISCERNMENT IS MAINTAINING AND DEEPENING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, OUR NEIGHBOUR, AND WITH CREATION

3. WE WAIT ON GOD

4. WE DISPOSE OURSELVES TO GOD BY BEING PEOPLE OF THE BEATITUDES

5. THE PRIMARY STANCE OF THE DISCERNING PERSON IS TO BE SALT OF THE EARTH. IT IS THE WITNESS OF A LIFE LIVED

6. THE OPENNESS TO GOD MANIFESTS ITSELF IN THE OPENNESS TO OTHERS AND CREATION

7.. THIS OPENNESS ALLOWS THEM AND US TO DISCOVER THE NEXT STEPS ON THE PATH

8.. THIS OPENNESS IS A FORM OF ATTENTIVENESS

9. WE ATTEND TO THE MOMENTS OF CONSOLATION AND DESOLATION: FORMS OF DEFAMILIARISATION

10. ATTENTIVENESS CARRIES US ON A JOURNEY

11. WE BECOME PROPHETS ON THAT JOURNEY

12. A PROPHET IS BOTH IN THIS WORLD AND IN GOD

13. THE DISCERNING NARRATIVES OF THE PROPHET COMES FROM THE PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DIVINE

14. WE SHARE WITH HUMANITY ITS CLOSED, BROKEN AND OPEN MYTHS

15. HOW WE ARE GRACED IN LIVING THESE DEFINE FOR US OUR GIFTS OF DISCERNMENT.

16. THE WORK WE ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN IS EFFECTIVE IN AS MUCH AS WE KNOW THE NARRATIVES BY WHICH WE CLAIM OURSELVES AND THE WORLDS WE LIVE IN

Jesus of Matthew's gospel as a spiritual director. He has done his first tour of Galilee. He has experienced the needs and the lives of the people there. His desire is to bring them back to the relationship with the Father that he has with the Father. He tells them.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10)

**THE PATH THROUGH THE BEATITUDES DISPOSES US TO LIVE DISCERNMENT IN OUR WORLD**