

# WORLDVIEW-POSTMODERNISM FACT SHEET

## KEY FACTS:

- Seventy-two percent of Americans agree, "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways, but both could still be correct."<sup>1</sup>
- Seventy-one percent of Americans agree, "There are no absolute standards that apply to everybody in all situations."<sup>2</sup>
- Fifty-three percent of those who claim there is no such thing as absolute truth identify themselves as born-again Christians.<sup>3</sup>
- Forty-two percent of those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians agree, "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways but both could still be correct."<sup>4</sup>

## KEY VERSES:

Joshua 24:14–15

Judges 17:6; 18:21

1 Kings 18:21

Psalms 31:5; 146:5–6

Proverbs 9:10

Isaiah 59:15

Jeremiah 7:28

Malachi 2:6

John 1:17; 3–4; 14:6;

16:13; 18:38

Romans 1:18–32; 2:8–9

2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14–17

2 John 4–6

## KEY QUOTES:

### Postmodernists

*"For the pragmatist [postmodernist], true sentences are not true because they correspond to reality, and so there is no need to worry what sort of reality, if any, a given sentence corresponds to – no need to worry about what 'makes' it true."<sup>5</sup>*

*"Truth isn't outside of power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."<sup>6</sup>*

### Critique

*"There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: They will be uncomprehending. That anyone would regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question  $2 + 2 = 4$ .... Openness—and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings—is the great insight of our times.... The study of history and of culture [according to this view] teaches that all the world was mad in the past; man*

<sup>1</sup> George Barna, *Virtual America* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994), pp. 83, 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982), p. xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 72–73.

always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all.

"The students, of course, cannot defend their opinion. It is something with which they have been indoctrinated."<sup>7</sup>

"Ours is an age in which 'conclusions' are arrived at by distributing questionnaires to a cross-section of the population or by holding a microphone before the lips of casually selected passers-by in the street... In the sphere of religious and moral thinking we are rapidly heading for a state of intellectual anarchy in which the difference between truth and falsehood will no longer be recognized. Indeed, it would seem possible that the words true and false will eventually (and logically) be replaced by the words likable and dislikable."<sup>8</sup>

## KEY SOURCES:

- Anderson, Walter Truett, ed. *The Truth About the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World*. New York, NY: Putnam, 1995.
- Anderson, Walter Truett. *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1990.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University, 1998.
- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1980.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York, NY: Knopf, 1972.
- . *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York, NY: Vintage, 1973.
- . *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York, NY: Vintage, 1994.
- Lyotard, Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1988.
- . *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Brian Massumi and Geoff Bennington. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1984.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Helen Zimmern. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1997.
- . *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Arnold Kaufmann. New York, NY: Vintage, 1989.
- Rorty, Richard. *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America, The William E. Massey, Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization ; 1997*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1998.
- . *Philosophy and Social Hope*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1999.
- . *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1979.

## KEY CRITIQUES:

**Online Articles:** <http://www.summit.org/resources/essays/>

- Allen, David. "Preaching and Postmodernism: An Evangelical Comes to the Dance." Review of *Confronting Postmodernism*. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 62–78.
- Beckwith, Francis, and Gregory Koukl. *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998.
- Cabal, Ted. "An Introduction of Postmodernity: Where Are We, How Did We Get Here, and Can We Get Home?" Review of *Confronting Postmodernism*. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2001).
- Carson, D.A. *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.
- Copan, Paul. *True for You, but Not for Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1998.
- DeYoung, David, ed. *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI:

<sup>7</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) pp. 25-26.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1963) p. 107.

- Baker, 2001.
- Erickson, Millard. "Foundationalism: Dead or Alive?" Review of *Confronting Postmodernism*. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 20–32.
- . *The Postmodern World: Discerning the Times and the Spirit of Our Age*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002.
- . *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001.
- Groothuis, Douglas. *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000.
- Guinness, Os. *Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype and Spin*. Hourglass Books. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000.
- Lundin, Roger. *The Culture of Interpretation: Christian Faith and the Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993.
- McCallum, Dennis, ed. *The Death of Truth*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1996.
- Noebel, David. *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews*. Rev. 2nd ed. Manitou Springs, CO: Summit, 2006. Original Pub., 1991.
- Norris, Christopher. *The Truth About Postmodernism*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993.
- Parker III, James. "A Requiem for Postmodernism, Wither Now?" Review of *Confronting Postmodernism*. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2001).
- Schreiner, Thomas. "The Perils of Ignoring Postmodernism." Review of *Confronting Postmodernism*. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 2–3.
- Veith, Gene Edward. *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994.