

Theology 1
Contemporizing the Christian Message
Dr. Todd Stinnett
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It is important to state the Gospel message in terms that will be understood in the twenty-first century. In doing so, some theologians have changed not merely the form of expression but also the substance. The goal for contemporizing the Christian message is to retain the content and biblical doctrine while making the message more understandable today.

Lessons Learned from the Contemporary Context of Theology

- We need to **beware** of identifying too closely with contemporary culture – dumbing-down or watering-down our theology.
- We need to **learn from all systems** of Christian theology – no one system has an exclusive corner on the doctrinal market.
- Maintain a certain degree of **theological independence** when studying someone else's ideas.

Approaches to Contemporizing the Christian Message

- Presenting biblical concepts in biblical terminology only.
- On the other hand, some have distanced themselves from biblical terminology in an attempt to transform the Christian message.
- **A third position between the two extremes** – Translation, not transformation, of the Christian message. Some have called this “crossing the hermeneutical bridge.”

Determining Permanence Within Biblical Doctrines

- The following criteria will aid us in discerning the timeless from the temporary:
 - **Constancy** across cultures – truth that transcends culture
 - **Universal setting** – some doctrines apply universally (baptism vs. a holy kiss)
 - A recognized **permanent factor** as a basis (eg. – God created them male and female)
 - **Indissoluble link** with an essential experience (eg. – the resurrection of Christ linked with the resurrection of the Christian dead in 1 Cor. 15)
 - **Final position** within progressive revelation (eg. – OT ceremonial laws)

Postmodernity and Theology

- **Premodernism** – characterized by a belief in the rationality of the universe, very teleological in nature (an emphasis on the supernatural and the natural)
- **Modernism** – an emphasis on the supernatural slowly disappeared, natural explanations for creation, human phenomenon, etc. began to emerge
- **Postmodernism** – a basic rejection of all explanations, both natural and supernatural
- Theology in the postmodern world is difficult, primarily because the postmodern mind **rejects any absolute truth claims**. Yet, we must still declare “thus sayeth the Lord.”