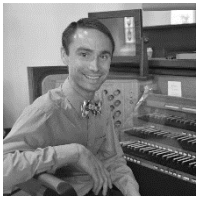
Postmodernism and Mission

James Marriott

In my experience teaching in Lutheran academic institutions over the last decade, talk about postmodernism rarely fails to elicit a response. The responses, though, are varied. Some reject postmodernism outright, decrying the propensity for relativism as an affront to the Gospel and to our society.[1] For these students, I have tried to gently probe their posture, asking them what exactly they are rejecting, or, more importantly, by what method are they facilitating that rejection (how postmodern of me, I know). Others accept postmodernism rather holistically, embracing its central tenets uncritically and spiraling deeper and deeper into deconstructed identities, whether spiritual, ecclesial, or cultural. Ambiguity, for these students, becomes a captor rather than a liberator. For these students, I have tried to gently pump the brakes, as one does while driving on icy roads with poor traction. Other students, often the ones most educated in philosophy and anthropology, maintain a more nuanced and balanced approach to postmodernism. In this essay, I hope to offer the reader some of my own thoughts and research, closely mirroring what I have taught, seen, and learned from these students who hold this balanced, nuanced approach. This approach is a keen tool for the mission field, as throughout my teaching and ministry career I have witnessed this approach being applied in the pulpit, the choir loft, the classroom, the theater stage, the basketball court, on social media, and in many other places of cultural engagement.

Postmodern Understandings of Culture

"Postmodernism" is a very handy term, used to describe art, architecture, literature, and philosophy. But for thinking about the Church's mission, postmodernism as a *cultural condition* is of the greatest interest. The very term "postmodernism" indicates that it is "post-" or "after" something called "modernism,"



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and that to understand "postmodernism" we need also a grasp of what is meant by "modern." Generally, various cultural theorists have assessed the last millennia of Western cultural development and practice in three broad categories: pre-modern, modern, and postmodern. The pre-modern understanding of culture is that of "a visible, comprehensible entity, the conscious creation of rational minds. It is the sum total of the spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic aspects of human society."[2] This pre-modern conceptualization is evident in the context of colonialization, where Eurocentric communities brought "culture" to those who were "uncivilized." Culture in this sense is something to be attained—you either have it, or you don't. Modernity, a product of the Enlightenment era, offered a more refined definition of culture: "[Culture] comprises those human attributes that are learned and learnable and are therefore passed on socially and mentally rather than biologically. Culture is in some sense a 'complex whole;' unity and harmony are key assumptions."[3] Thus, in a cultural construct that values order and homogeneity, modernity is something that neatly compartmentalizes. Here, culture is less something to be attained and more something to be assumed—one assumes (or is assumed to be part of) a particular cultural construct that is distinct from other cultural constructs. Your culture is, in modernity, one among many. Postmodernism, which has emerged over the last century and is still influential today, makes no such assumptions. Postmodernism deconstructs this tightly formed cultural framework of modernity in favor of a more porous, fragmented, and diverse cultural identity, as Arbuckle describes with this series of statements:

> Culture is not an entity, but a process of becoming;
> definitions of culture must be examined to uncover hidden assumptions of political, gender, or ideological power by authors;
> no observer is able to achieve a totally objective view of a culture;
> no one definition of culture can capture the complexity of a culture;
> globalization means that borders between cultures are softening;
> because people belong to a particular culture does not mean that they must act in predictable ways.[4]

No longer can we say that people "have a culture," because we exist in the midst of, respond to, use, and create cultural symbols.[5]

These statements reflect an evolution in the understanding of culture. A modern understanding expects that culture could distinguish one society from another. A postmodern understanding expects that any assessment of a culture must reflect the actual context of that culture. A modern understanding of culture tends to treat people as largely formed and shaped by the same influences. A postmodern understanding of culture presupposes that a unique variety of influences forms and shapes each person in a context. At the unavoidable risk of oversimplifying matters, the differences between the modern and postmodern understandings are illustrated in Figure 1.

	Modern	**Postmodern**
Internal	homogeneous	fragmented
Borders	closed	porous
Identity	essentialist	multiple
Metaphor	order	chaos
Place	territorial	"translocal"
Dissenters	marginalized	integrated
Other cultures	inferior	interdependent
Power	hegemonic	contested

Fig. 1. Distinctions between modern and postmodern understandings. (This chart was recreated for this article and originally published in Gerald Arbuckle, *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique* [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010], 5.)

Certain integrated aspects of postmodernism are especially pertinent to this essay: an embrace of ambiguity, the process of deconstruction based on a hermeneutic of suspicion, the human experience as foundation for knowledge and reality, and the fusion of various hermeneutical perspectives in the pursuit of meaning.

Ambiguity

While modernity strove to empirically and methodologically provide definite structure and meaning to all aspects of reality, "postmodernism has come to embrace ambiguity in its rejection of sure and absolute foundations for human knowledge."[6] Ambiguity is, to borrow Edwards's assessment of normal nihilism, simply "the way the world comes to us."[7] Melanie Ross affirms this, suggesting that "ambiguity is our very condition. We cannot deny its existence; we may as well learn to live with it, and even enjoy it."[8] Thus, postmodernism thrives on the ambiguity that is inherent in almost everything.[9] As my friend and colleague Joel Okamoto recently suggested to me, "No one is converted to postmodern ambiguity; everyone is submerged in it." He

went on to say that some *embrace* this ambiguity, others reject it, and still others seek to faithfully negotiate it by acknowledging ambiguity with humility and caution.

To avoid unnecessary ambiguity here, three interrelated *ambiguities* must be established: a metaphysical ambiguity, a cultural ambiguity, and a hermeneutical ambiguity. English theologian Ruth Page identifies ambiguity as a "*metaphysical* reality," meaning that the very structure and order of creation is an ambiguous balance between order and chaos.[10] This fundamental sense of ambiguity is foreign and even threatening to the modern person, who seeks clarity and structure, measurables and universals.[11] Ambiguity, however, does not imply a lack or absence of meaning; rather, ambiguity allows for a multiplicity of meaning.[12]

Peter Phan helps to illustrate the cultural ambiguity that conditions the relationship between postmodernism and inculturation in Western cultural contexts. Phan notes that postmodernism "refers to the cultural and social shift that has emerged since the 1930s and has been making its way from the West to the other parts of the world through the process of globalization."[13] The expression of postmodernism progressed through a variety of cultural forms throughout the twentieth century, including architecture, the arts, literature, philosophy, theology, and eventually the popular culture as a whole.[14] In consonance with that which was noted above, Phan suggests that postmodernism "rejects the stylistic integrity and 'purity' of modernity and embraces 'multivalence' and heterogeneity. It favors the technique of juxtaposition which assembles cheek by jowl seemingly contradictory styles of diverse origins."[15]

Phan identifies the relationship of television and film with the ambiguity of postmodernism. He suggests that film is the realm where "truth and fiction merge," in both juxtaposition and creative expression.[16] Additionally, television "brings the postmodern ethos of the film world into the living room and day-to-day life."[17] Especially with regard to live TV coverage,

> the world as presented by television, with its interpretation, commentary, and editing—often with bias—becomes the real world for most people, and consequently, what is not presented on television does not appear real to them . . . Furthermore, juxtaposing serious news with commercials and sitcoms and docudramas, television, like other postmodern artistic expressions, blurs the boundaries between truth and fiction, between the important and the trivial.[18]

From a perspective of community engagement and practice, Phan comments that the main characteristics of postmodernism are pessimism, holism, communitarianism, and relativistic pluralism:

> Pessimistic, because postmodernism abandons the Enlightenment myth of inevitable progress and highlights the fragility of human existence; holistic, in so far as it rejects the modern privileging of rationality and celebrates emotions and intuition; communitarian because it eschews modernity's individualism and its quest for universal, supracultural, and timeless truth, and emphasizes the role of the community in creating the truth;

> and relativistic and pluralistic, because there being many different human communities, there are necessarily many different truths.[19]

Additionally, postmodern society is predicated on a hermeneutical ambiguity rather than the supposed objective reality of modernity. Phan suggests that "what we call the 'real world' is, for postmodernism, nothing more than our ever-shifting social creation. Ours is a 'symbolic' world which we create through our common language. Hence, knowledge is replaced by interpretation."[20] This hermeneutical subjectivity is influenced not only on societal practice, whether through the influences of media, art, music, etc., but also within the inherent power dynamics that condition those very practices. To this end, Phan notes the importance of power dynamics in "the shaping of cultural identity," suggesting that "in the past, anthropologists tended to regard culture as an innocent set of conventions rather than a reality of conflict in which the colonizers, the powerful, the wealthy, the victors, the dominant can obliterate the beliefs and values of the colonized, the weak, and the poor."[21]

These three ambiguities—metaphysical, cultural, and hermeneutical—condition postmodernism's engagement with epistemology and scholarship, liberal arts and social sciences, pop culture and media, and just about every other identifiable marker of Western society. Furthermore, these three ambiguities structure (so to speak) the postmodern project of deconstruction.[22]

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a process of interpretation and analysis that dismantles the "face-value" of an argument in an effort to glean a more nuanced understanding. Despite the possible polemical posture of this notion, the goal is not *destruction*, but rather deconstruction and reconstruction that ultimately strengthens an argument, even if the methodology requires vulnerability and humility of both the speaker and the interpreter.

In *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*, James K. A. Smith takes "Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church," meaning he works to connect Christianity to postmodernism's project of deconstruction.[23] His purpose is to help the Church discover its identity and voice as it navigates the transitions between modernity and postmodernism.

Smith uses Jacques Derrida to illustrate the hermeneutics of suspicion that condition postmodern epistemology. Derrida's notion that there is "nothing outside the text" means "there is no reality that is not always already interpreted through the mediating lens of language."[24] As a departure from modernity and the concept of objective knowledge, Derrida illustrates how all knowledge is interpretation, conditioned by the context and influences on the individual-in-community.[25] The context of the interpreter conditions the manner in which a phenomena will be experienced, and the very experience of any phenomenon conditions the manner in which it will be interpreted.[26] This interpretive contextualization is the impetus for the distinctively postmodern practice of deconstruction. Deconstruction has two primary purposes. First, it works to identify and bring suspicion to inherited, normative, and

dominant interpretations of phenomena that often are portrayed as objective knowledge rather than interpreted realities.[27] Second, deconstruction works to recover "interpretations that have been marginalized and sidelined, activating voices that have been silenced."[28] This is, Smith says, the "constructive, yea prophetic, aspect of Derrida's deconstruction: a concern for justice by being concerned about dominant, status quo interpretations that silence those who see differently."[29] Thus, Smith highlights as a point of consonance between Christianity and postmodernism the potential of postmodern deconstruction to orient the community around ethics and justice. Knowledge and justice are negotiated entities through a communal project of interpretation and sharing.[30]

The community in context, then, becomes the steward of good interpretation, as Smith details:

> Given the goals and purpose of a given community, it establishes a consensus regarding the rules that will govern good interpretation . . . without the rules established by a community, there would be no criteria to govern interpretation. And Derrida is not opposed to rules as such. In fact, he speaks positively about a community having a kind of "interpretive police" to govern interpretation for that community. Thus communities fix contexts, and contexts determine meanings.[31]

Smith distinguishes, though, between "truth" and "objective knowledge."[32] It is a false assumption that an "interpretation" cannot be "true." Rather, things can be true and still be interpretations. The goal of the individual-in-community, then, is to make good or true interpretations.[33] Smith further illustrates this from a biblical perspective:

> Obviously, the Bible is subject to all kinds of interpretations. But this play of interpretations does not mean that all these interpretations are good or true. Deconstruction does not entail that one can say just anything at all about a text; it is not a celebration of sheer indeterminacy . . . Instead, Derrida emphasizes that there are important, legitimate determinations of context; in particular, the context for understanding a text, thing, or event is established by a community of interpreters who come to an agreement about what constitutes the true interpretation of a text, thing, or event.[34]

According to Smith, this fosters a healthy kind of pluralism that allows for ambiguity and interpretation to strengthen the discernment of reality.[35] Smith distinguishes, however, between a type of plurality that strengthens the exploration of various perspectives "inscribed into the very fabric of created finitude, such that we all see the same things but from different angles and locations" and a type of pluralism that presses at existential differences between peoples, such as "what it means to be authentically human and how we fit into the cosmos."[36] Smith acknowledges that even this distinction exists on a hermeneutical plane with this warning:

> We need to consider these as deep differences in interpretation rather than glibly supposing that the Christian account is objectively true and then castigating the Buddhist account for being merely an interpretation. In fact, both are interpretations; neither is *objectively* true. And so, to a certain extent, we must also embrace this postlapsarian or directional pluralism as the given situation in which we find ourselves. To assert that our interpretation is not an interpretation but objectively true often translates into the worst kinds of imperial and colonial agendas, even without a pluralist culture.[37]

This pluralism, then, should not threaten the society's (or the Church's) understanding of reality nor its confidence in truth. Instead, it should condition the society and the Church to engage conversations about knowledge and truth from a position of humility, acknowledging various perspectives and seeing interpretation as the collective responsibility of individuals-in-community. For the Christian, Smith offers this assurance and clarification:

> If the interpretive status of the gospel rattles our confidence in its truth, this indicates that we remain haunted by the modern desire for objective certainty. But our confidence rests not on objectivity but rather on the convictional power of the Holy Spirit (which isn't exactly objective); the loss of objectivity, then, does not entail a loss of kerygmatic boldness about the truth of the gospel.[38]

The Ambiguity and Deconstruction of Metanarratives

Smith also helpfully outlines and applies Jean-François Lyotard's "incredulity towards metanarratives."[39] According to Lyotard, "metanarratives are a distinctly modern phenomenon: they are stories that not only tell a grand story (since even premodern and tribal stories do this) but also claim to be able to legitimate or prove the story's claim by an appeal to universal reason."[40] Smith's use of Lyotard is especially focused on deconstructing the metanarrative of science and reason. As products of the Enlightenment, science and reason are posited on a foundation of universal, objective fact, when in reality there is a significant narrative underlying and orienting this very foundation—"as Lyotard puts it, scientific knowledge, which considered itself to be a triumph over narrative knowledge, covertly *grounds itself in a narrative* (i.e., an originary myth)."[41] Human reason is a narrative that has become a false indicator of absolute truth. Instead, as seen in Derrida's critique in the previous section, human experience and the interplay of interpretation makes a solid reliance on human reason impossible. The notion of human reason as a transcendent and universal application of human reality that is normative in all times and places precisely fosters the hermeneutics of suspicion described by Derrida. Lyotard's skepticism towards metanarrative is an important continuation of that critique, reorienting the notion of human reason from the transcendent to a dynamic interrelational negotiation.[42] To this end, Smith clarifies the critique of postmodernism on metanarratives:

> Metanarratives [are] universal discourses of legitimation that mask their own particularity; that is, metanarratives deny their narrative ground even as they proceed on it as a basis. In particular, we must note that the postmodern critique is not aimed at metanarratives because they are really grounded in narratives; on the contrary, the problem with metanarratives is that they do not own up to their own mythic ground. Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such.[43]

For Christianity, the potential application of Lyotard's understanding of truth and metanarrative is twofold. First, it fosters "the retrieval of a fundamentally Augustinian epistemology that is attentive to the structural necessity of faith preceding reason, believing in order to understand—trusting in order to interpret."[44] It is both an acknowledgement of the relationship between faith and knowledge as well as a hermeneutical reminder that Christianity itself is grounded on faith leading to knowledge, not vice versa. This reorientation of knowledge restores the voice of Christianity as a legitimate contributor to the negotiation of reality, where in modernity Christianity's voice had been largely silenced through the metanarrative of science and human reason.[45] Second, it helps to frame the Christian witness as narrative—the story of God's ongoing work in creating and redeeming the world. This narrative is performed liturgically as expression of Christian faith, and this liturgical expression of faith leads to knowledge and theology.[46] The caution for the Church is in how it engages that narrative as witness—whether as a story that silences other stories, or as a story that perpetuates one very good existential interpretation in dialogue with other interpretations and perspectives.

The Ambiguity and Deconstruction of Power

Along with Derrida's deconstruction and Lyotard's skepticism of metanarratives, Smith also highlights the importance of Michel Foucault's claim that "power is knowledge" as fundamental to postmodernism.[47] Foucault identifies the role of power relations within the most fundamental institutions and ideas of society. Smith lists "hospitals, schools, businesses, and . . . prisons" as institutional examples; yet institutions and ideals such as government and democracy, economics and capitalism, media, pop culture, and many other webs of relationships demonstrate the centrality of power in knowledge, message, and identity.[48] The function of these institutions and ideals is discipline and formation—the entities of power use these various institutions as a means to disciple and form society according to the predetermined ideals of those in power.[49] In conjunction with Derrida and Lyotard, Foucault's postmodern critique centers around identifying and deconstructing these normative expressions of power and privilege.[50] However, Smith nuances Foucault's suspicion of power from a Christian perspective:

> The critical point is that Foucault is absolutely right in his analysis of the way in which mechanisms of discipline serve to form individuals, but he is wrong to cast all such discipline and formation in a negative light. In other words, Christians should understand discipline positively, precisely because Christians should not be liberals in the classical sense . . . Christians should eschew the very notion of an autonomous agent who resists any form of control. By rejecting Foucault's liberal Enlightenment commitments, but appropriating his analyses of the role of discipline in formation, we can almost turn Foucault's project on its head.[51]

Smith's point is that Christianity is a normative exercise of power and authority, and the very notion of Christian discipleship involves a submission to the authoritative nature of Christianity.[52]

The fulcrum of Smith's perspective negotiates a balance between two extremes. On one side is the inappropriately authoritarian institutionalization of the Church and the society that continues to foster oppression and abuse—here, the message of the Gospel brings life and freedom.[53] On the other side is what Smith describes as an overly liberal, autonomous, and anti-institutional church that does not realize the extent of the consequences of such a stance.[54] Christianity involves power relations and disciplinary techniques that disciple people against the broken and sinful practices of the world.[55] Too often, however, "by appropriating the liberal Enlightenment notion of negative freedom and participating in its nonconformist resistance to discipline (and hence a resistance to the classical spiritual disciplines), Christians are in fact being conformed to the patterns of this world."[56] Smith insists, therefore, that there is a crucial link between power and *telos*:

> We can distinguish good discipline from bad discipline by its *telos* . . . A disciplinary form is proper when it corresponds with the proper end of humanity, which is to be (renewed) image bearers of God. So other forms of disciplinary formation are bad and wrong insofar as they try to mold human beings into something other than what they are called to be.[57]

For Smith, this means that there is an inherent relationship between power relation, *telos*, and disciplinary form, which conditions the manner in which cultural disciplines and practices might be critically and uncritically engaged. Smith illustrates this with some examples from U.S. popular culture:

> So also with the church: because the disciplinary mechanisms of Disney, MTV, and the Gap are so insidious and covert, we don't recognize the way in which their message—and their vision of the human telos—is shaping our own identity. Christians need first to recognize that disciplinary formation takes place in culture, then second, to recognize the antithesis between the dominant culture's understanding of the human calling and the biblical understanding of our ultimate vocation. But the church must also do a third thing: enact countermeasures, counterdisciplines that will form us into the kinds of people that God calls us to be. Too often we imagine that the goal of

> Christian discipleship is to train us to think the right way, to believe the right things. But the ultimate goal of sanctification and discipleship is to shape us into a certain kind of person . . . [58]

Thus, postmodernism is predicated on a project of deconstruction and a hermeneutic of suspicion that are manifest in Derrida as well as in Lyotard's skepticism of metanarrative and Foucault's suspicion of power relations. Smith notes the variant positions of the Church towards postmodernism, where some see it as a "new enemy taking over the role of secular humanism," while others see it as "fresh wind of the Spirit sent to revitalize the dry bones of the church."[59] Smith suggests that in either case "postmodernism tends to be a chameleon taking on whatever characteristics we want it to: if it is seen as enemy, postmodernism will be defined as monstrous; if it is seen as savior, postmodernism will be defined as redemptive."[60]

Liturgical Inculturation

In my particular academic field, liturgical inculturation provides one methodology for navigating postmodernism in the Church. This methodology has been employed especially on "the mission field," though increasingly the principles of this methodology are seen to govern almost all liturgical theology and practice. Liturgical theologians rely on inculturation for two primary purposes. First, inculturation works to identify that which is the core of Christianity, both in abstract concepts and in concrete practices, even while recognizing the contextuality of these core concepts and practices. Second, inculturation fosters the interaction of this Christian core with various cultural contexts, a process which inevitably changes *both* the culture and the newly inculturated essence.[61] These purposes are illustrated in a sort of equation offered by Peter Phan for the purpose of comprehending the process of inculturation: A+B=C.[62] In this equation, the "A" represents the "Christian core," again recognizing that "A" itself is some complex balance of unchanging essence and cultural/hermeneutical conditioning. The "B" is culture, which contributes philosophy, ritual behavior, language, art, architecture, and other cultural agents towards the unique engagement of "A." The complex nature of culture ("B") in a postmodern U.S. context makes the process of inculturation both intriguing and complicated. The "+" of the equation is the hermeneutical catalyst between the "A" and the "B". The very nature of addition is to enhance or increase, yet in some cases subtraction and refinement are needed in order to facilitate the interaction.[63] "C," then, is the new, inculturated, and local expression of Christianity—unified by the essential proclamation of and faith in the Christian witness, yet diverse in its cultural and contextual form. The cyclical nature of this process in every time and place ensures that the new "C" invokes change in both the "B" and the "A," giving the equation a kind of reciprocal momentum that propels its repetition.

In this way, the lens of inculturation helps to enhance the Church's understanding of its own liturgical practices, both in their immediate cultural contexts and in the way certain practices become "transcultural."[64] Inculturation also helps to frame and navigate these issues of ambiguity, deconstruction, and hermeneutics for the Church

in its engagement of culture. Inculturation, in postmodern terms, "is not an 'incarnation' of a timeless, unchanging and acultural reality (such as the eternal Logos) into a particular culture, but an *intercultural* encounter or dialogue between at least two cultures."[65] For Phan, issues of power are negotiated along the boundaries of inculturation, especially in the relationship between "Roman authorities and local churches."[66] This is particularly evident in his critique of various Catholic interpretations of inculturation in the twentieth century, specifically his argument that the Roman rite itself is a cultural form and not a transcultural essence.[67] From Phan's perspective, the Church fails in its engagement of cultural difference, noting that

> its approach to inculturation lies somewhere between assimilation and hegemonic control. The assimilationist strategy proposes an eventual eradication of cultural differences . . . immigrants are expected to 'become like one of us.' Hegemonic control honours cultural differences, but insists on some common culture among different ethnic groups, and the culture of the dominant or hegemonic group is imposed on all as such common culture, no matter what lip service is given to the rhetoric of equality and about the right of a people to its own culture and language.[68]

He notes that this "monocultural" orientation is the trend of multicultural societies including the United States, making it "all the more incumbent upon the Church, given its catholicity, to be more committed to genuinely equal partnership in inculturation."[69]

Conclusion

Thus, our Lutheran engagement of liturgical praxis—delivering the promises of God in Christ and receiving them in faith—necessarily involves a communal engagement with inculturation. The "A" of Gospel promise is delivered to the "B" of cultural context by means of various cultural forms, including language, ritual, music, art, architecture, aesthetics, and the like. These cultural forms are not value-neutral, but have associations and deep structures of various implications. I often impress upon my students that culture is not neutral, but all culture is redeemable. In this, ambiguity is acknowledged, deconstruction appropriately applied, and hermeneutics appropriately engaged to nuance the engagement of Gospel and culture that we know as church. This is the beauty of A+B=C. Inculturation is, as I describe it often to my students, an unavoidable, beautiful mess. Postmodernity, especially the engagement of ambiguity, deconstruction, and meaning making, offers helpful frameworks for the engagement of the inculturation task.

Liturgical inculturation is just one example of how postmodern principles inform our lives as Christians in this world. We would do well to reckon with these principles, with their strengths and weaknesses, as we carry out our callings to proclaim the Gospel at all times and in all places.

Endnotes

[1]A small handful of students have made the argument that we are "beyond postmodernism," and that is an intriguing question for another article. For now, I maintain that postmodernism still highly influences church and society, especially in the United States.
[2]Gerald Arbuckle, *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010), 2.
[3]Arbuckle, 2. Arbuckle notes that this view is still widely held by what he calls "nonspecialists."
[4]Arbuckle, 10.
[5]Arbuckle, 7.
[6]Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 65.
[7]James Edwards, *The Plain Sense of Things: The Fate of Religion in the Age of Normal Nihilism* (Penn State University Press, 1997), 46.
[8]Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 65.
[9]James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 26. Smith articulates this ambiguity as a type of continuity with modernity, further critiquing both from a Christian perspective:

> Postmodernism is an admittedly pluriform and variegated phenomenon. And postmodernism does not make a clean break from modernism. There are both continuities and discontinuities between modernity and postmodernity. The most significant continuity is that both deny grace; in other words, both modernity and postmodernity are characterized by an idolatrous notion of self-sufficiency and a deep naturalism. Noting this theological continuity, one also recognizes philosophical and cultural continuities, such that postmodernity is often an intensification of modernity, particularly with respect to notions of freedom, the use of technology, and so on.

[10]Ross, *Extravagant Affections,* 66, emphasis in original.
[11]M. C. Luchetti-Bingemer, "Postmodernity and Sacramentality," in *Sacramental Presence in Postmodern Context*, ed. L. Boeve and L. Leijssen (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 69.
[12]See also J. Severino Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987) for a concise and accessible introduction to this.
[13]Peter Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed. Keith Pecklers (New York: Continuum, 2003), 56.
[14]Phan, 56.
[15]Phan, 56, 57.
[16]Phan, 58.
[17]Phan, 58.
[18]Phan, 58.
[19]Phan, 59, referencing Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
[20]Phan, 59.
[21]Phan, 63.
[22]David Stewart, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Journal of Literature & Theology* 3, no. 3 (November 1989): 296–307.
[23]Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism,* 1.
[24]Smith, 39.
[25]Smith, 52.
[26]Smith, 49.
[27]Smith, 51.

[28]Smith, 51.
[29]Smith, 51.
[30]Smith, 52.
[31]Smith, 53.
[32]Smith, 43.
[33]Smith, 43.
[34]Smith, 53.
[35]Smith, 50.
[36]Smith, 50.
[37]Smith, 50, 51.
[38]Smith, 51.
[39]Smith, 62.
[40]Smith, 65.
[41]Smith, 67.
[42]Smith, 67.
[43]Smith, 69.
[44]Smith, 72.
[45]Smith, 73, 74.
[46]Smith, 76.
[47]Smith, 23.
[48]Smith, 85.
[49]Smith, 85ff.
[50]Smith, 98.
[51]Smith, 99.
[52]Smith, 100.
[53]Smith, 100.
[54]Smith, 99.
[55]Smith, 105, 106.
[56]Smith, 101.
[57]Smith, 102.
[58]Smith, 106.
[59]Smith, 18.
[60]Smith, 18, 19.
[61]Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation," 55.
[62]Phan, 76.
[63]Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 39–43. Schreiter's work informs my understanding and application of the "+" in Phan's equation.
[64]For one such framework of "transcultural" elements, see the "Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture Full Text," Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, posted June 16, 2014, https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/nairobi-statement-on-worship-and-culture-full-text/.
[65]Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation," 64.
[66]Phan, 65.
[67]Phan, 70. Here and in the next few references Phan is especially critiquing the 1994 document *Varietates Legitimae*, which works to set boundaries on the scope and process of inculturation in the Roman rite. For a full text of *Varietates Legitimae*, see "*Varietates Legitimae*: Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy," Adoremus, accessed February 28, 2017, https://adoremus.org/1994/03/instruction-inculturation-and-the-roman-liturgy/.
[68]Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation," 70, 71.
[69]Phan, 71.