

Theology of the Emerging Church: Postmodern Epistemology and the Interpretation of Scripture

© Roman Soloviy, 2010

Roman SOLOVIY, *L'viv, Ukraine*



Roman Soloviy, Ph.D. (Religious Studies) has studied at the departments of history and philosophy of the L'viv National University. Since 2004 he has held the position of President of L'viv Theological Seminary. He has written eleven research publications on the history of Protestantism in Ukraine. His current interest in research lies in early church history and contemporary Protestant theology.

Introduction

Every historical epoch with its specific socio-cultural context presents a challenge for Christianity: balancing between the extremes of confrontation and conformism in relation to the leading cultural paradigm. The contemporary state of epochal transformation of paradigms in the development of world culture and civilization has been characterized as postmodernism. Postmodernism opens new perspectives for Christianity to help it fulfill its goals, but at the same time it carries the danger of causing the church to lose its theological and cultural identity in the course of its search for ways to reveal the message of the Gospel to the twenty-first century. A prominent trend in contemporary Western Protestantism is the Emerging church^[1]; a movement that openly proclaims its purpose of accommodating Christianity to the kaleidoscope of postmodern culture.

In spite of its comparatively short history, the Emerging church has penetrated many local church communities, theological institutions and para-church organizations. Most of these are in North America and Great Britain and to a lesser degree in other parts of the world (i.e., Australia, New Zealand and South America). Followers of the movement are trans-denominational Christians who want to integrate postmodern culture, calling on the Church to face the major social and cultural problems of the contemporary world. They believe that the Church should be an authentic and open community, an environment that welcomes art and education, and a place where people with different views will be treated with respect. The ideologists of the movement pro-

^[1] There are no terms in Ukrainian religious studies to describe many of the modern theological movements of Western Christianity. For convenience, we will use the term "Emerging church movement" in this article, even though the members of the movement prefer to identify themselves as "Conversation."

mote the eclectic use of mystery and tradition in worship. They prefer to see theology as the pursuit of the beauty and truth of God, and not as a search for logical statements, textual arguments and doctrinal formulations.

At this present time, an institutional form of the Emerging church does not exist in former Soviet Union countries. However, a key characteristic of this movement has been a desire to avoid institutionalization and to remain a community or network of participants in constant dialogue about the Christian faith, mission and practice.

This is especially true since the current environment of increasing globalization and virtualization of the world causes geographical and institutional constraints to lose their former importance. It is no coincidence that the central communication and information platform of the Emerging church is the internet. In addition, along with the inevitable shift of post-Soviet countries into the mainstream of global civilization, our evangelical churches will be forced to meet the same intense challenges with which Western Christianity has long been concerned. Social fragmentation, the loss of the privileged status of Christian churches, their marginalization and exclusion from secular space, and the growing influence of postmodern philosophy will inevitably put the evangelical church in a place where it is forced to understand its situation and find new ways to implement the ideals of Christianity. Therefore, without a doubt, the movement of post-Soviet evangelical Christianity towards these theological ideas is only a matter of time. Therefore, the study of the fundamental characteristics of the Emerging

church is necessary. In this article I propose to describe only one facet of Emerging theology, namely its doctrine of the Scriptures, this being a central component of the doctrine of evangelical Christianity.

Everything must change

The main prerequisite for the formation of the teachings of the Emerging church is a deep conviction that the world is radically and irrevocably changing. The church must therefore transform itself to keep in step with the transforming world. Supporters of the movement argue that Western civilization is now completely beyond the Christian world which has dominated since the early Middle Ages. In the post-Christian world, which is a pluralistic cultural environment, the church ceases to be one of the foundations of society, but is astonished to discover its increasingly marginal status. With the loss of this privileged position, before all Christians lies a radical challenge to begin a new approach to being an effective witness. In response to the seismic cultural shifts, the Emerging church is trying to creatively reimage itself, aiming to achieve a missionary presence in the postmodern world. It is this view which underlies the discourse of the Emerging church^[2]. It is worth noting that the call for a fundamental rethinking of the essence of Christianity has repeatedly been stated by representatives of major Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. In particular, John Robinson came to just as radical a conclusion by saying, "we required a completely new model, a metamorphosis of the Christian faith and practice. I am confident that this restructuring would not affect the fundamental truth of the Gospel. But we must resolutely redefine all religious categories and moral absolutes, even those that we carefully nurture, and

^[2] D. Kowalski, *Emerging Church – Distinctive Teachings and Goals*. – 2006. – [Cited 2009, 15 June] – Available from: <<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/291-emerging-church-teachings>>.

most importantly, we should be prepared to redefine our image of God himself.”^[3]

Since postmodernism, which characterizes the present era, represents a dramatic break with the modernist past, only a total reform of the church can create conditions for the preservation of a relevant and effective position in the new socio-cultural environment. In other words, the survival and development of the church requires not only changes in its methodology of hermeneutics in theological studies and it must not only direct itself to new emphases in theological truths, but it must develop a radically new kind of Christian. Purposely, Brian McLaren, one of the leading theologians of the movement, wrote a book called *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crisis and a Revolution of Hope*.^[4] An influential website states, «We must create a new image and develop new ways of what it means to be a true follower of Jesus, new ways of doing theology and living a ‘biblical’ life, a new understanding of missions, new ways of expressing sympathy and a search for justice, new kinds of communities of faith, new approaches to worship and service, new integration and conversation, and convergence and dreams.”^[5] Since church life has for a long time been intertwined with the dominant cultural paradigm, and the latter is radically and irreversibly changed, Christians must re-examine every doctrine and practice of the church, finding new expressions for their definitions and manifestations. A well-known postmodernist author, Rob Bell, wrote that the Protestant Reformers knew that what they “did, wrote, and decided

would necessarily be revised, rethought, and reworked again... by that I do not mean cosmetic, superficial changes, such as better lighting and music ... I mean theology: the doctrine of God, Jesus, the Bible, salvation, and the future ... We must continue to reform the way in which Christian faith is defined, lived and explained.”^[6]

The pluralist principle

Postmodernism is an extremely broad term that has many interpretations which are often contradictory and even mutually exclusive. The new attitude and the quintessence of the spirit of the time (or, as Umberto Eco has defined postmodernism, “the spiritual state”^[7]), which was later called postmodernism, appeared during the Second World War, when Western civilization found it imperative to explain the global catastrophe of the time. Working on this task were philosophers from the Frankfurt School of philosophy (1930–1970), attempting to analyze the whole course of European civilization. The critique of ideas from the Enlightenment played a key role in their intellectual constructs. The essence of the project amounted to universal human values: humanism, freedom, equality, justice, reason, progress. Armed with these rationalist ideals, the Enlightenment should have led to the complete victory of progress and transformation of society on the basis of these ideals and values. However, the educational utopia failed, leading to a historic disaster of enormous proportions. Further philosophical thought has developed two conceptual reasons for this

^[3] John Robinson, *Honest to God*, M., 1993, p. 90.

^[4] B. McLaren., *Everything Must Change. Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope*. 2007.

^[5] «Emergent Theological Conversation» at Yale Divinity School. – 2006. – [Cited 2007, 15 May] –

Available from: <<http://www.yale.edu/divinity/news/news.archives.shtml>>

^[6] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, p.12.

^[7] Umberto Eco. Postmodernism, irony, entertainment. // *The Name of the Rose*. M., 1989. P. 460-461.

approach: the idea that unbounded rationality results in the emergence of repressive power and a view of anti-universalism, pluralism and fragmentation as the values that confront totality. Postmodernist thinkers have concluded that the Enlightenment project failed. The conclusion, in their view, is to essentially abandon any attempt at a comprehensive interpretation of life, proclaiming “war on totality.” Resignation to our inability to describe and explain the world as a whole with the help of general theories, is often considered the main characteristic of postmodernism. As noted by V. A. Emelin, postmodernism should be understood as the specific outlook that has gained acceptance in the late twentieth century, the main feature of which is pluralism, the assumption of the simultaneous coexistence of different points of view.^[8]

According to the principle of pluralism, advocates of the postmodern world do not view the world as a whole, united around one center. Rather, it is a fragmented world, broken into many episodes between which there are no stable connections. Reality is fragmented by a multiplicity of priorities, and the ability to dictate any hierarchy between them is excluded. The principle of pluralism is fundamental to the understanding of postmodernism and has directly derived from it such things as fragmentation, decentralization, variability, contextualization, uncertainty, irony, and simulation. This approach also applies to theories, paradigms, and concepts where there is only one possibility. Inherent in postmodernism, relativism is supported by one of the founders of the Emerging church, McLaren, who says, “Ask me whether Christianity (my version, yours,

the pope’s, or someone else’s) is orthodox and true, and my honest answer will be: partly but not quite ... I would say we probably have a few things right, but many things that are wrong ... But at least our eyes are open! Be generous. Christian orthodoxy does not mean to claim that we have caught the only truth and put it on the wall.”^[9]

Within such a relativistic approach, when Christians are denied the opportunity to know absolute truth, it remains only to verify our level of experience to determine what is really “true,” that is, what actually works in our socio-cultural context. Postmodern philosophers and theologians insist that the truth is known and approved only within the community. “There is no meta-narrative, there are only local stories,” they proclaim. In other words, truth is culturally and socially relative. Real cross-cultural communication becomes impossible because those who are outside the community must first join it, and only then can they understand and perhaps accept the ideas of the community. If a level of truth as propositional statements is unattainable, the only authentic essence of Christianity is spiritual feelings and social activities. This is, in particular, what McLaren writes about. He proposes to compare the search for modern Christianity and the ideal system of beliefs with medieval church architecture. Christians in a new culture can look back at historical doctrinal structure (i.e., confession of faith, systematic theology), as we look back on medieval cathedrals: they have a real beauty, which must be preserved, but these architectural masterpieces are now for the most part empty or are used more as tour-

^[8] V. A. Emelin, *Postmodernism: In Search of Definition*. – [Cited 2009, 23 December] – Available from <http://emeline.narod.ru/postmodernism.htm>

^[9] Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, p. 293.

ist attractions than as sacred buildings. What is left of Christianity if it stops looking for (or protecting) the perfect belief system? McLaren says, “In the new culture, I think it will be Christianity as a way of life” or “Christianity as a path to spiritual formation.” “In this setting, preaching both loses and gains status. Instead of an exercise in *transferring information* so that people have a coherent, well-formed ‘worldview’ (often an upbeat name for ‘systematic theology’), preaching in the emerging culture aims at *inspiring transformation*. In my hopeful moments, I see this new emphasis on spiritual formation as making a convergence possible.”^[10]

Another important conclusion from the adoption of the thesis according to which Christians cannot know absolute truth, is a call to abandon the dogmatic in matters of doctrine and interpretation of orthodoxy as «generous,»^[11] including doctrines that Christians have historically evaluated as abnormal or heretical. “A generous orthodoxy, as opposed to a tight, narrow, controlling, or critical orthodoxy that characterized much of Christian history, does not take itself too seriously. It is humble, it does not require too much ... It does not think orthodoxy is the exclusive domain of theologians, but, as Chesterton, it welcomes the poets, mystics, and even those who want to talk a little, or remain silent, in-

cluding the frustrated and doubting. Their silence speaks volumes about the greatness of God, which transcends all human articulation.”^[12]

The fact that the movement refuses to form any type of systematic theological doctrine pushes for the increasing emphasis on ethics. Tony Jones, former national coordinator of one of the centers of the Emerging church called “Emergent Village,” says his organization «is an amorphous collection of friends who decided to live together regardless of our church affiliation, regardless of our theological commitments.”^[13] He compares the formulation of confessions of faith to “conduct boundaries, which means that you must load guns and put soldiers at those boundaries. Conserving boundaries becomes an obsession ... It's just not the ministry of Jesus.”^[14] In 2006, the “Emergent Village” publicized the address of the well-known theologian LeRon Shults who listed three reasons why their group should not have to formulate doctrinal statements. He said that such a step was unnecessary and inappropriate since “Jesus did not have a ‘statement of faith’” and “the struggle to capture God in our finite propositional structures is nothing short of linguistic idolatry.” Shults states that the standardization of beliefs in a movement would appear to be a catastrophe. He worries about the

^[10] Brian McLaren, *Emerging Values. The next generation is redefining spiritual formation, community, and mission.* – 2003. – [Cited 2008, 21 April] – Available from: <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/currenttrendscolumns/culturewatch/3.34.html>>.

^[11] The term “generous orthodoxy” was first used by one of the founders of post-liberal theology, Hans Frei, in his written reply to K. Henry’s lecture in which the latter had expressed doubt concerning the adequacy of narrative theology (1987). Frei describes “generous orthodoxy” as the combination of the best elements of liberalism and evangelical Christianity (Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 1992). The

term “generous orthodoxy” was also studied by post-conservative author Stanley J. Grenz).

^[12] Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy.* – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, p. 151.

^[13] Emergent & Emergent. – 2008. – [Cited 2010, 28 November] – Available from: <<http://www.emergingchristian.com/2008/03/on-emerging-emergent.html>>

^[14] Peter J. Walker and Tyler Clark, «Missing the Point: The Absolute Truth Behind Postmodernism, Emergent and the Emerging Church»// *Relevant Magazine* (July/August 2006), 72. – [Cited 2009, 13 August] – Available from: <<http://nearemmaus.wordpress.com/2006/07/06/missing-the-point-emergent-featured-in-relevant-magazine>>

following fact: “a ‘statement of faith’ tends to stop conversation. Such statements can also easily become tools for manipulating or excluding people from the community. Too often they create an environment in which real conversation is avoided out of fear that critical reflection on one or more of the sacred propositions will lead to excommunication from the community.”^[15]

Postmodernist epistemology

In spite of the resourceful efforts of postmodernist theologians to construct a theology that would have universal meaning, all their ideas finally yielded to one or another form of skepticism or relativism. This circumstance is caused by the fact that, in postmodernist thinking, no truth or principle can be regarded as normative. That is, no one person or sacred “scripture” can authoritatively delineate truth. «Truth» and «morality» are always defined within the context of a particular society and are modified from one society to another. This epistemology leaves virtually no room for the proclamation of objective, universally respected values from the biblical text. T. Jones, a recognized leader of the movement, calls on Christians to use this approach to Scripture, arguing that “we must stop seeking for some sort of objective truth to reveal itself to us from the text of the Bible.”^[16]

To understand the relativistic approach to the truth of Scripture in the theological concepts of postmodernism, it is necessary to consider the peculiarities of its epistemology which is characterized by such key

terms as defundamentalism (or postfundamentalism), fragmentalism and constructivism.^[17] Defundamentalism (denial of the “basic” or “foundational”), proclaims the weakness of knowledge, its «incoherence» with the fact of the world “as it is.”^[18] The criticism inherent in modernism of the search for the fundamental bases of life and knowledge becomes the foundation of postmodern reflection, destroying belief in their existence. Postmodernism, emphasizing the transformation of the human being’s relationship with the world as a result of the invasion of symbolic systems and mass media, which constructs a world of unreal models, postulates futility in its appeal to the “real” object. The premise of the existence of a “cultural world-text” outside of this reality either does not exist, or its connection with reality is so unreliable that it does not give sufficient grounds to judge it with a reasonable degree of certainty. Therefore, we must break the boundaries between objects and their representations, between truth and falsehood. Truth loses its status of certainty, absoluteness, and universality. When we lose the idea of a “true” interpretation, we also deny the right for an alternative type of interpretation to exist. According to this approach, knowledge cannot be assessed outside the context of culture; it is tradition and language that make it possible.

In postmodernism, as the Russian philosopher and publicist Viktor Aksiuchits states, “in terms of general variability and randomness, postmodernism has devalued the main categories of reason: reality, truth,

^[15] LeRon Shults, «Doctrinal Statement» // Email from Emergent, May 4, 2006. – [Cited 2009, 7 August] – Available from: <http://emergent-us.typepad.com/emergentus/2006/05/doctrinal_state.html>

^[16] Tony Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, p. 201.

^[17] L. G. Sudak, *Epistemology of Postmodernism*. – [Cited 2008, 13 September] – Available from <<http://www.chem.msu.su/rus/teaching/sociology/3.html>>

^[18] The call to Christian theology to reject fundamentalism is based on the book by Stanley J. Grenz, John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (2001).

people, history, knowledge, philosophy, and language. Any phenomenon is a product of time and chance. Reality is reduced to the linguistic, textual model, amenable to endless variations and interpretations. The question of objective truth is meaningless because all truth is a linguistic, historical or social structure which, in turn, is an interpretation of previous designs. Nor is there universal criteria enabling to distinguish truth from non-truth or the beautiful from the ugly, good from evil, the sublime from the lowly.”^[19]

The fragmentary nature of knowledge means rejecting the idea of a progressive increase in knowledge on the road to truth. This is replaced by the principle of historical and cultural situation. Knowledge is regarded as specific, local, and what is happening here and now, but not as a statement of universal laws. The fragmentary nature of knowledge relates to the postmodern interpretation of reality in multiple ways, consisting of different elements and events and the interpretation of human beings as a complex of uncombined images and events. Instead of an absolute truth, in postmodernism first place is given to plurality and relative “truths” that live in peaceful coexistence within the borders of a pluralistic ideology.

The constructionist element proclaims a shift in emphasis from the postmodern image of the world “as is” on the basis of the idea that the world in certain social and linguistic structures, processes and determines the social structures of power relations. Knowledge does not contain any images of the real world; it consists of struc-

tures based on interpretive schemes. In 1979, J. F. Lyotard published a book which resonates with this theme called *The Postmodern Condition*.^[20] Lyotard relates the emergence of postmodernism to the increasing erosion of the fundamental principles or meta-narratives, on which Western civilization has traditionally been based. This term and its derivatives (i.e., meta-discourse) Lyotard uses to define a global and comprehensive worldview, those “explanatory systems” which, in his opinion, were organized by Western society and serve as a means of legitimizing it; its religion, history, science, psychology, and art, that is, any form of knowledge. As an example, Lyotard took the Christian story of the fulfillment of God’s will on earth and the salvation of humanity, the Marxist political story of class conflicts and the Enlightenment story of intellectual progress. According to Lyotard, postmodernism can be described as a “distrust of the meta-narrative.” Albert Mohler develops this definition: “all the major philosophical systems are dead and all cultural accounts are limited. All that remains are little stories accepted as true by different groups and cultures. Claims to universal truth (i.e., meta-narratives) are oppressive, ‘summarizing’ must therefore be resisted.”^[21] Thus, the aim of postmodernism is not to formulate an alternative set of assumptions, but to ensure the impossibility of raising any “large-scale theoretical interpretations that claim universal application” (J. Weiss). Postmodernism views the Christian faith as a meta-narrative and reduces it to the level of personal opinion. Its in-

^[19] Viktor Aksiuchits. *The Birth of Postmodernism out of Buddhist Metaphysics*. – 2001. – [Cited 2009, 10 May] – Available from: <<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/jurnal/ideas/postmodernbuddha.htm>>

^[20] J.F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. M., Aleteya, 1998. – p.160

^[21] Albert Mohler, *Ministry is Stranger than it Used to Be: The Challenge of Postmodernism*. – 2004. – [Cited 2009, 10 June] – Available from: <<http://www.albertmohler.com/2004/07/15/ministry-is-stranger-than-it-used-to-be-the-challenge-of-postmodernism/>>.

terpretation of faith is nothing more than a simulacrum, and in this sense, Christianity is no better than any other belief. As a consequence, postmodernism is not a full-fledged revival of Christianity after the prominent secular project of modernity, but the limited conquest of a selected social space. Christianity does not achieve revenge, it is merely tolerated in the post-secular world (A. Maler).

Revelation, hermeneutics and community

The theologians of the Emerging church emphasize the significance of “humble epistemology,” which calls for Christians to abandon the arrogant effort to give clear and unambiguous answers to complex theological issues in Christian theology, leaving room for mystery. “Humble epistemology” is based on a postmodern rejection of any attempts to organize the results of knowledge according to a system because they cannot be systematized or fit into any scheme. This approach is at odds with many traditional methodologies, such as the Christian doctrine of revelation. The well-known Catholic thinker John Caputo, whose works greatly influenced the theology of the movement, argues that contemporary religious pluralism does not allow us to assert with confidence that we have a revelation. We can believe that we have received a revelation, but this belief conflicts with the views of other religious communities, many of which cast doubt on Christian revelation. Therefore, Christians should humbly acknowledge that our revelation does not guarantee true answers, but is just one of many possible perspectives. He writes: “That means that the be-

lievers in that Book should temper their claims about The Revelation they (believe they) have received, since it is their interpretation that they have received a revelation, while not everyone else agrees. A revelation is an interpretation that the believers believe is a revelation, which means that it is one more competing entry in the conflict of interpretations. Believers should accordingly resist becoming triumphalistic about what they believe, either personally or in their particular community.”^[22]

The Irish philosopher and theologian Peter Rollins brings Caputo’s views to the extreme, arguing that revelation is impossible because of the absolute transcendence of God. In his popular book, *How (Not) to Speak of God*, Rollins says that God is so beyond the limited properties of the human mind, that he in no way can reveal Himself to us. Repeating the idea of “the kingdom of noumena” of Kant and the “via negativa” neo-Platonic mysticism, Rollins proclaims that God is fundamentally beyond, unexplainable and unknowable. In contrast to the traditional evangelical view that Christianity is based on the belief that God communicates with mankind through revelation, Rollins defended the «new perspectives» according to which “revelation ought not to be thought of either as that which makes God known or as that which leaves God unknown, but rather as the overpowering light that renders God known as unknown.”^[23] Because “the manifest side of God is also hidden,” Rollins concludes that, “when it comes to God, we have nothing to say to others and we must not be ashamed of saying it.”^[24] Since there is nothing we know about God and even if there would be something we

^[22] John D. Caputo, *On Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2001. p. 22.

^[23] Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God*. Par-

aclete Press, 2006. pp. 7-8, 17.

^[24] Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God*. Paraclete Press, 2006. pp. 17, 42.

might know, there is no guarantee that we would be able to interpret it correctly. Rollins transfers attention to the only aspect of Christian faith that survived after the postmodernist deconstruction of Christianity – praxis or how we live out Christianity. Rollins calls us to abandon the traditional aspirations of “right belief” to replace them with “believing in the right way,” which Rollins refers to as “believing in a loving, sacrificial, and Christlike manner.”^[25] While Christian beliefs have never characterized the «real or reality,» somehow they are able to convert Christians into Jesus’ disciples, who follow after Him without losing the ability to accept fellowship with people of other religious beliefs or non-believers. Rollins explains that in this community “we are unified, not on the level of some specific set of doctrines, but rather in our desire that our beliefs, whatever they are, help to enable us to be more open to the divine and more open to one another, exhibiting a loving, caring, and Christlike way of being in the world.”^[26]

Rollins, like other theologians of the Emerging church, emphasizes the importance of community as “the only hermeneutic of Scripture” (L. Newbigin). It should be noted that the understanding of the role of community in the Emerging church has two main aspects: the first concerns the goal, the second concerns the conceptual side of the issue. Brian McLaren proposes a slightly utopian ideal of the new community’s purpose: “...Jesus presents us with a dream (embodied in the group image “kingdom of God”) that is ir-

reducibly communal, familial, and social. It is not just a dream of more and better individual Christians standing like isolated statues in a museum. It is a dream of a community vibrant with life, pulsating with forgiveness, loud with celebration, fruitful in mission.”^[27] For the Emerging church, focus on community, identity and mission is very important, since its supporters waste less effort on the planning and realization of inner church events, but instead give more attention and resources to the practical manifestation of their faith in the real world. The conceptual aspect of community in the Emerging church emphasizes its role in cognition of the truth. According to the peculiar postmodern epistemology that truths are socially conditioned structures, limited knowledge can be achieved only in the context of a particular social group. In other words, the truths of Christianity cannot be achieved by an outside observer, but knowledge of them comes through a connection to the community in which the truths of life are reflected. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon explain the role of the community in the knowledge of truth: “It is a mistake to think we can give . . . arguments to people who are ‘inside’ their own language... We encourage them to ‘come and see’ the truth of our story by ‘trying on’ the Christian way of life—by learning how we, members of the Christian community, live, talk, and behave. That is, by becoming an insider in our community, they can learn to see the truth of our faith, even though they never could know its veracity from the outside.”^[28]

^[25] Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God*. Paraclete Press, 2006, p. 133.

^[26] Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God*. Paraclete Press, 2006, p. 133.

^[27] Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000, p. 35.

^[28] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon *Resident Aliens*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989. pp. 46-47. Quoting: Bob Wright, The Emerging (Emergent) Church. [Cited 2010, 10 January] – Available from: <<http://www.lighthouse-trails-research.com/The%20Emerging%20Church%20Master.doc>>.

Narrative approach

The Emerging church accepts the main positions of post-liberal narrative theology. For example, McLaren states that Christians who support the traditional approach to Bible interpretation have become victims of its incorrect reading. "There is more than one way to 'kill' the Bible," McLaren says. "You can dissect it, analyze it, abstract it. You can read its ragged stories and ragamuffin poetry, and from them you can derive neat abstractions, sterile propositions, and sharp-edged principles."^[29] But, actually, according to the theologians of the movement, the Bible should never have been studied and analyzed; it should be accepted as a work of art and it should be read as a narration, since the largest part of the Bible has actually been written in the narrative genre.

The emergence of a narrative direction in Christian theology relates to the broad notion of a "linguistic turn" in philosophy, especially in philosophical hermeneutics. Both approaches deny the referential nature of language in relation to the texts. In the 1970s and 80s, philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur, Umberto Eco, Jacques Derrida and others, each in their own way, underlined the nature of language. In the framework of narrative theology, truth is a function not of objective reason, but of the narrative life of an individual. All ideas therefore find their meaning and can be called true or false only within the terms of the narrative. Narrative is regarded as a basic category which delivers truth. Different narratives contain different truths, which do not necessarily mean that truth is relative since the narrative is the only "home" which the truth possesses. Such an assessment of the truth, explained by the

specific interpretation of human consciousness, by its nature also has a narrative form. The very identity of a man is shaped by the narratives of the community within which he exists, which he accepts and which interact with him. These stories link the past and the future into a coherent whole, giving people an opportunity to form historical consciousness and identity. Thus, past and future become flexible: people may work on new goals for the future and read their past differently because of the nature of their interactions with other stories. Authoritative sources of faith (such as the story of Jesus) are a baseline which become the criterion by which we judge other narratives. Consequently, doctrines and theological formulations are just a reminder of the narratives of faith. Narratives within which a person lives (i.e., the Christian narrative, the narrative of the middle class, etc.) may enter into a dialogue to find out exactly what they need to re-interpret in order to ensure consistent relationships between a man and his community.

Post-conservative evangelical authors have had a significant impact on the interest of the Emerging church in narrative theology, seeking to expand the sources used in evangelical theology. This theological method was described by Stanley Grenz as "a revision of evangelical theology" based on the point of view according to which the essence of evangelical Christianity is a very special experience and focused around spirituality. Theology in this case is regarded as a display of the faith of people whose common life is created and formed from the paradigmatic narrative embodied in the Scriptures. The essence of evangelical Christianity and its theology is seen not as propositional truths found in doctrine, but enshrined in the narrative experience that cannot be substituted by theology. In other words, although the

^[29] Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. p. 158.

importance of doctrine is not violated, it is perceived not as an end in itself, but as the necessary rules which reflect and direct the community of God's people. In thinking about the experience, theology uses several sources including the Bible, traditional Christian thought (especially material from the early church and the Reformation), culture (including philosophy, science and art) and the perceptions of the modern community of God (popular religion). Thus, Grenz sees experience as the core of Christian faith, placing it above the supernaturally revealed statements about truth. He defines theology as an intellectual reflection of a faith community of believers in a particular cultural and historical context, for example, "the actions of second order" which create valuable intellectual models, but not truth derived from Scripture. At the same time he continues to refer to the Biblical message of both the "norma normans" for Christian faith and practice.^[30] Post-conservative scholars reject the traditional approach to the Scriptures, preferring to see it as a realistic narrative inspired by the Holy Spirit. Developing such an understanding of Biblical theology in the book *The Scripture Principle*, Clark Pinnock uses the terms "verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy" as part of the true evangelical doctrine of Scripture, but insists that their value should be determined by traditional scholastic and deductive theology. An important aspect of post-conservative interpretation of Scripture is the desire to treat it holistically. Thus the divinely authored story of Scripture concerns God's actions aimed at creating a community and its worldview. Post-conservative interpretation of Scripture has had a significant impact on the biblical theol-

ogy of the Emerging church. Characteristic of this idea, Benjamin Sternke states, "Christianity is first and foremost a story. It is a history. It is not a set of 'timeless truths' or abstract doctrines that we tap into from week to week. It isn't a static system of truth, it's a dynamic story, an unfinished narrative that we live within, and a narrative that we have a part in working out; we help to move the story toward its conclusion. When Christianity is conceived as merely 'timeless truths,' the goal becomes 'getting to heaven when I die,' and then we're left with not much to do until death.... But Christianity isn't primarily about going to Heaven, it's about seeing Heaven come to Earth. Unless Christianity is understood as an unfinished drama, there will be no inherent impetus for mission. But when Christianity is seen as a story, mission makes perfect sense; working out our salvation, learning to love more completely, stewarding the environment, and ridding ourselves of sin are natural out-workings of narrative theology. If we understand Christianity as a story, and read the Bible like the story it is, we realize that the story is going somewhere. And we are part of that story, we have a part to play in moving the story towards its conclusion."^[31]

John O'Keefe, one of the leaders of the Emerging church, develops a narrative view of theology: "The narrative helps define who we are and what we do - it is a core part of our DNA. No matter the story, no matter the ending, truth is in the narrative. All story is valid, all story, both individual and group, can add to the collective of the community. When we see life as simply a collection of story, we start to understand both our humanity and God's di-

^[30] Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*. - Eerdmans, 2000.

^[31] Benjamin Sternke, Narrative theology and the

missional church. - [Cited 2007, 01 March] - Available from: <http://benjaminsternke.typepad.com/benjaminsternke/2006/09/narrative_theol.html>.

vinity. The narrative allows for creative, adaptable, nonlinear thinking with group input and an interactivity based on transparency and a living worldview."^[32] Robert Bell also says that the Bible is useful, not primarily as an actual revelation of God's real action in history, but as a metaphor that helps us understand our own experience. Bell believes that the Bible is not the Word of God but an "expression of spiritual experience of the people of God over the centuries."^[33] He argues that Christians must accept the Bible as a rough, uncensored and passionate account of how a person senses the living God. Thus, in accordance with the views of scholars of the Emerging church, the truth can be attained only through involvement in community life, in the context of a culturally embedded narrative. This story can be found in interpreting the cultural situation of the stories of the Bible, as well as the stories of the reader's own life.

Deconstruction

Theologians from the Emerging church reject conservative evangelical theology's attention to the oral and written word, regarding it as a logo-centric product of modernism from the Enlightenment, not noticing that a postmodern approach to language also has its dangers. The radical wing of the Emerging church, which proclaims the necessity a postmodernist reading of Christianity, seeks to build a new hermeneutical approach, building on the strategy put forward by the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida. According to him, every culture is built around a system

of known values which in that culture are seen as unconditional and universal; however, the existence of another culture may be directed by entirely different (sometimes conflicting) ideas and values. It is therefore considered that the perception of each text contributing to the policy of a culture's constructs has a center and periphery. This refers to the inherent human tendency to explain the world through a system of double (binary) opposition, that is, opposite concepts (i.e., black and white, male and female, body and soul, content and form, signifier and signified, nature and civilization, etc.) In this case, one of the concepts usually becomes privileged and displaces the other at the periphery. Such an attitude is unintentionally perceived by carriers of this culture. Deconstruction sees its purpose as that of reflecting on habitual judgments, abandoning the dominance of the "center" and providing more meaning from the periphery. According to A. Desnitskiy, as a result of this reading of the text, meanings are formed that previously seemed hidden or were suppressed or prohibited. In this case, deconstructionists consistently avoid the creation of new binary oppositions, requiring constant deconstruction even of their own situation. Thus, postmodernism involves the conversion of authors and their works into a kind of raw material, an object of manipulation in the production of their own texts.^[34] Deconstruction seeks to sever the connection between words and the things that they stand for, so that the definition of words is treated more as an exercise in power, rather than the subordination of reality. The final stage of decon-

^[32] John O'Keefe, Church 3.0, the Upgrade// Next-Wave Magazine. Nov. 2001. – [Cited 2010, 19 June] – Available from: <<http://www.next-wave.org/nov01/church30.htm>>.

^[33] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*. Grand Rapids: Zonder-

van, 2005, P.62-63.

^[34] A. Desnitskiy, "New Hermeneutics" and the Perspectives of Orthodox Biblical Studies. – 2009. – [Cited 2009, 22 December] – Available from: <<http://www.kiev-orthodox.org/site/scripturistic/2075/>>

struction is valuation: the forcible insertion of an author's content which is often new and contrary to the text or the work of another author.

Grentz states that for Derrida "...a sign will always lead to another sign. Thus, a language is a chain of signifiers referring to other signifiers, in which each signifier in turn becomes what is signified by another signifier. And because the textual location (the immediate context in which they appear) in which a signifier is embedded constantly changes, its meaning can never be fully determined...meaning is never static, never given once-for-all. Instead, meaning changes over time and with changing contexts. For this reason, we must continually 'defer' or postpone our tendency to attribute meaning."^[35] Thus, postmodernism deliberately refuses to search for the correct, objective content of the text, but denies its existence because any text is created on the basis of other, previously established texts. Actually, in postmodernism the entire culture is seen as a collection of texts, on the one hand originating in previously established texts, and on the other, creating new texts. So, instead of finding a single correct value of the text, first place is given to the subjective play of ideas, images and meanings associated primarily with the expectations and interests of the reader. Postmodern hermeneutics denies the author's placing of a certain content in the text. It is believed that when the text is read, content is developed each time in a new way. With a consistent hermeneutic of "free play of active interpretation," the original meaning which the author had in mind is not considered, nor is it the only possible one, nor is it the most correct one. One of the

most radical followers of this approach, R. Barthes, developed the idea of "author's death," according to which every reader can rise to the level of the author. As an author, he has the right to assign to the text any meanings, including those that were not even remotely envisioned by its creator. That is, "the text in fact becomes not only autonomous, but anonymous as well."^[36] It is important to emphasize that deconstruction is a continuous process and eliminates the tabulation of any outcome, generalization, or reduction to any one meta-discourse. Such an attempt would mean the intention to stop this process and to create a boundary, exhaust it, and to cast doubt on the idea that all texts are diverse and contradictory.

Because deconstruction is not seeking to penetrate into the true, according to this hermeneutic, the structure of the content of the text, the identification of unique values correlating to a single truth of being, E. Gurko makes the reasonable conclusion that, in the traditional sense, deconstruction is not a hermeneutic strategy at all. According to the researcher, "deconstruction, on the contrary, is oriented to the plurality of the meanings, on the absence of a single matrix of text meaning, on the principal 'polyphony' of the philosophic text, which cannot be reduced to a common truth/meaning. The deconstructionist reading of any classic philosophical text, i.e. the reading directed to liberalization of a written text base, causes the liberation of a mass of new, previously unnoticed (by the author as well) nuances of meaning, which not only enrich the philosophic trends presented by these texts, but also correct, change, and sometimes even transform them radically."^[37] Applying this ap-

^[35] Stanley J. Grentz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p. 144.

^[36] V. Ratnikov, "Postmodernism: Sources, Formation, Nature," *Philosophy and Society*, № 4, 2002.

^[37] E. Gurko, *Deconstruction: Texts and Interpretation*. J. Derrida. *Leave This Name (PostScript)*, How to Avoid the Conversation: Denegation. – Minsk: Econompres, 2001. – p.7

proach to Bible interpretation, Desnitskiy notes, “a postmodernist is more interested in the reader’s reaction than in the author’s intention. If biblical critics sought to reconstruct the world standing behind the text (where did the Bible come from?), then postmodernism is more interested in the world standing in front of the text (where does the Bible go?).”^[38]

Even though the theologians of the Emerging church, as a rule, do not support peremptory acceptance of deconstructionist theory, their work displays its influence. Over-simplification, “mosaic thinking” as opposed to linear-hierarchical thinking, the elaborate re-definition of terms, and refined linguistic creations are encountered in their work quite often. The movement’s increased interest in deconstruction is suggested by a greater number of publications in which attempts are made to reflect the use of deconstruction as the basis for an alternative hermeneutic. In particular, LeRon Shults focuses on three characteristics of deconstruction which are attractive to the Emerging church. First, deconstruction not only recognizes but also accepts the category of distinction (difference), which becomes a philosophical means of expressing the protest of the next generation, its experience of liberation from the “obsession with uniformity.” Secondly, deconstructionist epistemology calls for humility in the search for knowledge, requiring constant questioning of why we adhere to our beliefs; it challenges the claims to the possibility of mastering the final, neutral, universal truth. As noted by Shults, “as we continue longing to know and be

known by God, deconstruction can alleviate some of our modernist anxiety by helping us accept our finitude; we are not God, but this is OK and we can all take a deep breath and humbly follow in the way of Jesus without pretending like we know everything. After all, even He didn’t know everything!”^[39] Finally, deconstruction causes surprise. It is impossible to predict what will arise when the process begins of questioning beliefs and practices that shape our interpretation. Thus, the deconstructionist approach to philosophy and theology, according to Shults, is one way for Christians to open the possibility of surprise and even adoration because it contributes to real transformation.

The influence of deconstruction can be traced in the work of leading Emerging church theologians Burke and McLaren. The latter, in particular, completely rejects the traditional approach to Scripture and its interpretation: “So how do I interpret this particular Scripture? ...I don’t believe it can be used to argue that Christianity is the only true religion. First, Christianity as a religion didn’t exist when Jesus spoke these words (John 14:6). Compounding this point are two additional facts: no one actually recorded Jesus’ words at the time he spoke them, so we have no proof that they are indeed his words, and what he did say, he said in Aramaic, which means that nothing in the Bible as translated into any other language can be taken literally anyway.”^[40] McLaren calls us to accept the postmodernist’s “new hermeneutic.” He states: “The Bible requires human interpretation, which was [is] a problem.... How do

^[38] A. Desnitskiy, “New Hermeneutics” and the Perspectives of the Orthodox Biblical Studies. – 2009. – [Cited 2009, 22 December] – Available from: <<http://www.kiev-orthodox.org/site/scripturistic/2075/>>.

^[39] LeRon Shults. *Difference, Humility, and Surprise. Why is the Emerging Church drawn to decon-*

structive theology? – 2007. – [Cited 2009, 22 November] – Available from: <http://churchandpomo.typepad.com/conversation/2007/03/difference_humi.html>.

^[40] Spencer Burke and Barry Taylor, *A Heretic’s Guide to Eternity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006. – p. 107.

'I know the Bible is always right? And if 'I am sophisticated enough to realize that I know nothing of the Bible without my own involvement via interpretation...What good is it, liberals would ask conservatives, to have an inerrant Bible if you have no inerrant interpretations?'"^[41] In other words, even if the church professes belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, that does not change anything because of the absence, and, indeed, the fundamental impossibility of achieving an infallible interpretation of Scripture. That is, the Bible may well be a message of truth from God to man, but since we are not able to give a "true" interpretation of Scripture, that fact has no significant impact. Consistent application of postmodern hermeneutics makes Scripture inactive and makes us wonder why God even tried to communicate with mankind. It is hard not to agree that the ideal, absolutely infallible interpretation of Scripture is not available, but this does not mean that the Bible in general cannot be meaningful because most of the content of Scripture is clear and understandable. According to the postmodernists' assessment of the principle of rationality as a manifestation of the imperialism of reason, McLaren also calls us to abandon the objective-analytic method of literal interpretation of Scripture, branding it as "a virus of reductionism."^[42] In his view, we should only have a mystical-poetical approach in mind since "...the Bible itself contains precious little expository prose. Rather it is story laced with parable, poem interwoven with vision, dream and opera."^[43]

Significant influence among moderate supporters of the movement, in our opin-

ion, are the ideas of the post-critical approach (Lindbeck) which does not accept the absolute authority of biblical criticism and at the same time recognizes its efficacy in selected issues, combining traditional biblical exegesis with the achievements of modern science. Within this framework, the task of Christian theology is seen not as a text analysis for the study of its historical context, but in the knowledge of the actual value of the text itself in which God speaks to man. Reading of the text is no longer considered a matter of separate independent individuals but occurs within the community which holds certain views. In other words, the reading and interpretation of the text occurs in the context of the relationships between God, the text and the community. However, the post-critical approach does not confess the need to examine every word of the Bible as literally infallible, fully shared by all biblical principles. The effect of the post-critical approach, in particular, can be traced to the concepts of Pagitt, who proposes to consider the Bible as an authoritative community member who must be heard on all matters about which it speaks.^[44] This approach is designed to enhance and not reduce the authority of the Bible. In essence, our confidence in the Bible does not depend on information that «proves» that the Bible is true. We believe the Bible because our hopes, ideas and experiences create the community of faith and require us to believe. According to Pagitt, the Bible is the authority for Christians because of the way that it is perceived by the community of faith, not because it is the Word of God. This view is reflected by Livingston: "...I stand as part of a triangle of interac-

^[41] B. McLaren B, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 133-134.

^[42] B. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 193.

^[43] B. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 172.

^[44] Doug Pagitt, *The Emergent Church and Post-modern Spirituality Debate*. CD-ROM, Session Three, Minneapolis, Twin City Fellowship, Jan 2006.

tions. There is myself, my community, and the Bible. All the elements interact with one another in ways that strengthen the fabric of the whole.”^[45] Consequently, we have to use the idea of the “interpretive community,” according to which every reader refers to a specific community which interprets the Bible based on the dominant view adopted within its framework. This approach also notes the importance of the community in the context that created the text, the necessity of taking into account the worldview of readers, which were accessed by the author. Bell uses the same hermeneutics, commenting on the text of Matthew 16:19 and 18:18: “He [Jesus] is giving his followers the authority to make new interpretations of the Bible.”^[46] That is, we are dealing with the guiding principle of postmodern hermeneutics: what matters is not what the author wanted to tell his readers who lived in the distant past, but what now arises in the minds of readers who see this text. New interpretations lead naturally to the idea of creating a new church: “Now is our turn to step forward and take responsibility for what the church will be for the next generation, it’s our turn all over again to review, restructure and make a dream.” A common feature of these hermeneutical approaches is the goal: to free theology from the proclamation of Scripture to allow for the new truths that lie behind the pages of the Bible. During this process, the Bible becomes nothing more than a museum exhibit from which you can learn and admire but which, if you so desire, can be ignored. Shifting to the reader’s perception allows

the reader to skip the text through the filter of perception and to reject those parts of the text which he considers unacceptable or particularly archaic.

Conclusion

Evangelical Christianity can learn many lessons from the postmodern critique of contemporary problems, but it should regard their postmodern solutions with great caution because after the deconstruction of meta-narratives and linguistic systems, there is no real path from “what is” to “what should be.” In this regard, we should pay attention to the proposal of Richardson in reference to Jesus as the model Christian meta-narrative.^[47] In his view, Jesus deeply believed in the truth and veracity of the biblical meta-narrative, even though He was undergoing radical criticism for His version of the narrative during His time and culture. Based on the understanding of Jesus as a pre-modern post-modernist, Richardson sees in Christ’s preaching a criticism of Israel, which has reached a moment in its history when its language, institutions, symbols, and religion itself serve as a basis for the dominance and centrality of Israel. That is why Jesus condemned all the ideological and institutional manifestations of this “ethnocentric Jewish world dominance wrapped in religious clothing,” by the “decentralizing of Israel,” moving all those who had previously been marginalized in a subordinate position to the forefront. (i.e., Gentiles, women, sick, poor, crippled, blind and sinners) Today the church must also deter-

^[45] Neil Livingstone, *How can you trust the Bible?* – 2007. – [Cited 2009, 22 March] – Available from: <[http://chitv.org/ourprograms/Adult Classes/The Story/howcanyoutrustthebible\[1\].pdf](http://chitv.org/ourprograms/Adult%20Classes/The%20Story/howcanyoutrustthebible[1].pdf)>.

^[46] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. – p. 50.

^[47] Rick Richardson, *The Perceptions We Face* // Billy Graham Center evangelism roundtable “Issues of Truth and Power: the Gospel in a Post-Christian Culture” – April 22-24, 2004, P. 13. [Cited 2010, 22 May] – Available from: <<http://www.billygrahamcenter.com/ise/RTpapers/Papers04/richardson.pdf>>

mine whether or not the dominant outlook of its environment is as Israel was in Jesus' day, placing itself at the center and marginalizing all others. Our task, according to Richardson, is to continue Jesus' prophetic ministry by the decentralization of Christianity's meta-narratives with the purpose of bringing Jesus back to the center, where God actually always is. In other words, human beings will inevitably use meta-narratives to replace God in our world. Every historical version of the Christian meta-narrative is inevitably distorted by human prejudice, greed and lust for power, and therefore requires constant patching, updating, and reform. Richardson offers a look at Jesus as the center of decentralization for the Christian faith and the constant search for ways to adjust and update our version of the Christian meta-narrative. In this concept, Jesus first appears as a critique of the message and meth-

ods of the church and then becomes a catalyst for their correction. It is important to note that Richardson does not bow down to relativism. Although he denies the existence of the final version of the truth or meta-history, he argues that since only God is free from the distortions of vested interests, it is He alone who can understand and tell the story without the distortions caused by the zeal to power. The church is called to a constant process of expression which is close to the truth revealed by God in Scripture's meta-narrative, within the existing culture, mindful of its inability to implement this vocation without distortions due to bias and the pursuit of power. Therefore, we must continually check the message and method of the proclamation of Jesus, looking at Him not only as a defender of the church, but as its loving and fundamental critic.

Bibliography

1. «Emergent Theological Conversation» at Yale Divinity School. – 2006. - [Cited 2007, 15 May] – Available from: <<http://www.yale.edu/divinity/news/news.archives.shtml>>.
2. Erickson Millard. Postmodernizing the faith. Evangelical Responses to the Challenges of Postmodernism. – Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002. – 163 p.
3. Bell Rob. Velvet Elvis. Repainting the Christian Faith. –Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. – 208 p.
4. Burke Spencer, Taylor Barry. A Heretics Guide to Eternity. – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006. – 288 p.
5. Caputo John. On Religion (Thinking in Action). – New York: Routledge, 2001. – 144 p.
6. Grenz Stanley. A Primer on Postmodernism. Eerdmans, 1996. – 199 p.
7. Grenz Stanley. Theology for the Community of God. – Eerdmans, 2000. – 691 p.
8. Hauerwas Stanley, Willimon William. Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony. – Nashville: Abingdon, 1989. – 179 p.
9. Jones Tony. Postmodern Youth Ministry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. – 240 p.
10. Knight H. Henry. A Future for Truth. Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern World. – Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997. – 253 p.
11. Kowalski D. Emerging Church – Distinctive Teachings and Goals. – 2006. – [Cited 2009, 15 June] - Available from: <<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/291-emerging-church-teachings>>.
12. Livingstone Neil. How can you trust the Bible? – 2007. – [Cited 2009, 22 March] – Available from: <[http://chitv.org/ourprograms/AdultClasses/TheStory/howcanyoutrustthebible\[1\].pdf](http://chitv.org/ourprograms/AdultClasses/TheStory/howcanyoutrustthebible[1].pdf)>.
13. McLaren Brian. Everything Must Change. Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope. 2007. – 336 p.

14. McLaren Brian. *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*. – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. – 192 p.
15. McLaren Brian. *A Generous Orthodoxy*. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. – 352 p.
16. McLaren Brian. *Emerging Values*. – 2003. – [Cited 2008, 21 April] – Available from: <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/currenttrendscolumns/culturewatch/3.34.html>>.
17. McLaren Brian. *The Church on the Other Side*. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. – 224.
18. Mohler Albert. *Ministry is Stranger Than it Used to Be: The Challenge of Postmodernism*. – 2004. – [Cited 2009, 10 June] – Available from: <<http://www.albertmohler.com/2004/07/15/ministry-is-stranger-than-it-used-to-be-the-challenge-of-postmodernism>>.
19. O'Keefe John. *Church 3.0, the Upgrade*// Next-Wave Magazine. Nov. 2001. – [Cited 2010, 19 June] – Available from: <<http://www.next-wave.org/nov01/church30.htm>>.
20. Pagitt Doug. *Re-Imagining Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003, P. 122, 123.
21. Pagitt Doug. *The Emergent Church and Postmodern Spirituality Debate*. CD-ROM, Session Three, Minneapolis, Twin City Fellowship, Jan 2006.
22. Richardson Rick. *The Perceptions We Face* // Billy Graham Center evangelism roundtable “Issues of Truth and Power: the Gospel in a Post-Christian Culture” – April, 22-24, 2004, P. 13. [Cited 2010, 22 May] – Available from: <<http://www.billygrahamcenter.com/ise/RTpapers/Papers04/richardson.pdf>>.
23. Rollins Peter. *How (Not) to Speak of God*. – Paraclete Press, 2006. – 144 p.
24. Shults LeRon. *Difference, Humility, and Surprise. Why is the Emerging Church drawn to deconstructive theology?* – 2007. – [Cited 2009, 22 November] – Available from: <http://churchandpomo.typepad.com/conversation/2007/03/difference_humi.html>.
25. Shults LeRon. *Doctrinal Statement* // Email from Emergent, May 4, 2006. - [Cited 2009, 7 August] – Available from: <http://emergent-us.typepad.com/emergentus/2006/05/doctrinal_state.html>.
26. Sternke Benjamin. *Narrative theology and the missional church*. – [Cited 2007, 01 March] – Available from: <http://benjaminsternke.typepad.com/benjaminsternke/2006/09/narrative_theol.html>.
27. Walker Peter, Clark Tyler. *Missing the Point: The Absolute Truth Behind Postmodernism, Emergent and the Emerging Church*// Relevant Magazine (July/August 2006), 72. – [Cited 2009, 13 August] – Available from: <<http://nearemmaus.wordpress.com/2006/07/06/missing-the-point-emergent-featured-in-relevant-magazine>>.
28. Аксюцич Виктор. *Рождение постмодернизма из духа буддийской метафизики*. – 2001. – [Cited 2009, 10 May] – Available from: <<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/jurnal/ideas/postmodernbuddha.htm>>.
29. Гурко Е. *Деконструкция: тексты и интерпретация. Деррида Ж. Оставить это имя (Постскрипtum), Как избежать разговора: денегации*. – Минск, 2001. – С.7.
30. Десницкий Андрей. *«Новая герменевтика» и перспективы православной библеистики*. – 2009. – [Cited 2009, 22 December] – Available from: <<http://www.kiev-orthodox.org/site/scripturistic/2075/>>
31. Емелин В.А. *Постмодернизм: в поисках определения*. – [Cited 2009, 23 December] – Available from: <<http://emeline.narod.ru/postmodernism.htm>>.
32. Лиотар Ж. -Ф. *Состояние постмодерна*/ Пер. с фр. Н.А. Шматко – М.: Институт экспериментальной социологии, Спб.: Алетейя, 1998. – 160 с.
33. Ратников В.П. *Постмодернизм: истоки, становление, сущность* // *Философия и общество*, № 4, 2002. – С. 120-132.
34. Робинсон Дж. *Быть честным перед Богом*. – М., 1993. – 158 с.
35. Судас Л. Г. *Эпистемология постмодернизма*. – [Cited 2008, 13 September] – Available from: <<http://www.chem.msu.su/rus/teaching/sociology/3.html>>
36. Эко У. *Постмодернизм, ирония, занимательность* // *Имя розы*. М.: Книжная палата, 1989. С. 460-461.