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## The Scriptures and Culture: Examining the Skew of Postmodern Christianity

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## The Scriptures and Culture: Examining the Skew of Postmodern Christianity

### Cover Page Footnote

What follows in this article would not have been possible without the encouragement, engagement, and enthusiasm for truth of Joshua Heisterkamp and James Watts; I am proud to be able to call these two men friends and, more still, brothers in the faith. Also, a special thanks must be given to Dr. Martin E. Sheldon for his consistent and thoughtful correction throughout the process of completing this research. To God be the glory for all. Amen.

## **The Scriptures and Culture: Examining the Skew of Postmodern Christianity**

At present, there is a clear and persistent issue pervading the Christian church; the scope of which extends deep into the theological and historical values held within the same. Perhaps more simply said, there is a subtle – yet clear – skewing of the truths of God’s word by the culture of postmodern society. What this means is that contrary to the longstanding unity held amongst the church regarding topics which many today would call “hot topics” – such as homosexuality, the authority of Scripture, unconditional love, and judgment – there has been a falling away from adherence to the absolutes of Scripture, and therefore God’s will, in favor of that which is appealing to modern culture. It is this mindset that has caused believers to take what was once a clear cut truth and to now say, “Well, the Bible says that [insert topic here] is wrong, but Jesus said not to judge, so I can’t say one way or the other. You do you”; this is wholly contradictory to the context, purpose, and unity of Scripture. This skewing by postmodern Christianity can be said to have come from the failure to recognize, understand, and adhere to those Scriptural truths which may be “hard to swallow,” or are easily placed/taken out of context.

It is with the above in mind that there must needs be an examination of this issue in order to provide a worthwhile solution. So, it is hoped that through exegesis of some select passages of Scripture, in concert with analysis of scholarly work on the same, that the reader will benefit twofold: [1] to recognize the skewing of Scripture due to postmodern thought/culture; and [2] to provide, through demonstration of the former, a way in which one can more readily recognize, understand, and adhere to Scriptural truths. Thus, this writer works to slow, taper, and minimize the detrimental effects of postmodern skew in favor of steadfast, unyielding, and ultimately God-breathed truth.

## Argument Simplified: Postmodern Framework vs. Biblical Exegesis

To be clear on method, this segment will contain two selected biblical passages, cultural observations related to postmodern views on each, and a brief exegesis of those same passages according to their inherent biblical context. Having said that, it is important to clarify two items. Firstly, when the word “postmodern” is used it is done in reference to the postmodernist line of thinking as related to spirituality/morality; and two, that this specific line of thinking, according to Raymond A. Eve, is simply that “for postmodernists, all such grand narratives are to be rejected in favor of the belief that the truth, to the extent that it even exists, is highly individualistic, subjective, and resides within the individual.”<sup>1</sup> For this writing, Eve’s description will be adopted to show the postmodern mindset as an ultimately pluralistic, eclectic, and subjective sense of morality and truth.<sup>2</sup>

### 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond A. Eve, “Wiccans v. Creationists: An Empirical Study of How Two Systems of Belief Differ,” *Skeptic* 10, no. 3 (2003): 1-14. [https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&u=vic\\_liberty&id=GALE%7CA112409045&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon](https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA112409045&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon).

<sup>2</sup> Brian Neil Peterson, “Postmodernism’s Deconstruction of the Creation Mandates,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62, no. 1 (2019): 125-40. <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2214888401?accountid=12085>.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are from the *New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2016).

## **The Skew: Inclusivity is In, Judgment it Out**

Perhaps the reader has heard the term “gutter Christian,” a reference to person who makes claim to be a real Christ follower yet remains in close affiliation and participation in that which the Bible defines as unacceptable to God;<sup>4</sup> so, for this skewing, postmodern culture would seem to view 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 in that one should continue to reach out to those who are of the world by remaining fully embedded and enveloped in the environments, customs, and actions of those persons (*ref. vv. 9-10*) and that one should avoid judgment of the believer because it is God alone who judges and they are trying to reach lost souls (*ref. vv. 12-13*). As can be seen here, this appears to have been an omission of verse 11 and a distinct misrepresentation of verses 12-13; moreover, it is likewise indicative of omission in favor of confrontational avoidance and deference to culturally accepted “normalcy.” On another note, this similarly implies that it is acceptable for one to include such positions of error as, again, “normal” within the church.

Pointedly, let serious attention be drawn to the fact that this mindset suggests that the “reaching out” to those who do not believe inhibits the need for accountability of those who claim Christ – a detrimental omission of verse 11. Having said that, this writer does not disagree with attempting to exhort a believer through loving admonishment and/or reaching out to those who are not Christians, but it does beg the question concerning where one draws the line and therefore kicks the proverbial dust from their feet. With that in mind, perhaps it is best if the passage speaks for itself.

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<sup>4</sup> Note: To be clear, this writer does not intend to imply that Christians should not be engaged in missional outreach with those who are not of the body of believers, but simply that should a person or group of people claim to be of the body, then their actions, speech, and beliefs should reflect that position in accordance with the Scriptures

### According to Text: Paul's Exhortation

When examining the total context of 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, it is important to note the primary focus of Paul's writing. This focus is not upon judgment generally, but specifically. To begin, the literary context indicates that Paul is seeking to clarify an earlier position regarding the judgment of, and therefore the association with, others (vv. 9-10). As he progresses, he affirms that he never intended that believers were to act as Pharisees in that they were not to engage with or interact with those who – from the biblical position – would be considered to be immoral non-believers [those of the world] (v. 10).<sup>5</sup> That said, Paul's clarification is found in that should a person be “named a brother” [or sister] who remains involved in such immoral activity, then one should avoid even having a meal with that person (v. 11).<sup>6</sup> Paul then goes on to discuss that his point is not that believers are to be involved in “judging those who are outside” but that there is a responsibility to maintain the relational integrity of “those who are inside” (v. 12). His final, pointed, assertion being that it is God who deals with those who are unbelievers, but that amongst believers there must be a separation from that which is “evil” (v. 13).<sup>7</sup>

To be more specific, when Paul identifies those who are “named a brother,” the word brother – being ἀδελφός (*adelphos*), which can be utilized either literally or figuratively – is used [figuratively] here in reference to those of close relationship to Christ Jesus (v. 11);<sup>8</sup> ergo, these persons are the community of fellow believers united through the “sharing of interest and beliefs

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<sup>5</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary. R. W. Yarbrough and R. H. Stein (Eds.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 161. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4447180>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 161-3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 163-6.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad W. G. A. Schmidt, *A Greek-English Reference Manual to the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Based on Tischendorf's Greek New Testament Text and on Strong's Greek Lexicon with Some Additions and Amendments* (Hamburg, Germany: disserta Verlag, 2018), 10. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=5736071>.

[in Christ Jesus].”<sup>9</sup> So, for this point, it is apparent that Paul is admonishing the church in order to prompt action toward those who claim Christ, but do not walk according to that faith (vv. 9-11).

As for the concept of judgment, this word – translated from κρίνω (*krinō*) – is seen twice in the passage (vv. 12-13).<sup>10</sup> In its first usage, the context of this word is seen in that it is used to identify a sense of “intrinsic evaluation,” or as Thayer puts it “the disciplinary judgment to which Christians subject the conduct of their fellows, passing censure upon them as the facts require.”<sup>11</sup> This usage is indicative of taking a predetermined action based upon a known standard versus making a determination as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of a situation or act – this simply means that one is not engaging in the condemnation of another *per se*, but that they are holding accountable the actions of that fellow believer according to the aforementioned established standard. The second usage, seen in verse 13, uses *krinō* as correlated to the actions of God and is therefore implied to be distinctly of definitive action in deciding between absolutes [e.g. – righteous or unrighteous].<sup>12</sup> So, as seen here, God’s judgment is of a righteous finality inherently (v. 13), whereas the believer’s judgment is one of a functional and dependent nature. Simply said, the believer is fully dependent upon God’s established standard by which to view and decide [judge] upon *internal* matters, not *external*. This partners with the issue mentioned in

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<sup>9</sup> Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=3038361>.

<sup>10</sup> Schmidt, *Greek-English Reference Manual*, 308; see also: Danker and Krug, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 208.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer (Trans., Ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1901), 360-361. <https://ccel.org/ccel/grimm/greekeng/greekeng.i.xv.html>; see also: Danker and Krug, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 208.

<sup>12</sup> Schmidt, *Greek-English Reference Manual*, 308; see also: Danker and Krug, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 208; Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 360-361.

the former section by answering that verse 11 is key to maintaining integrity and unity in the faith – believers are to hold accountable [judge] fellow believers.<sup>13</sup>

#### Matthew 7:1-6

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

#### **The Skew: No Right to Judge**

Many times, there are those who make the claim that only God can judge them – how right those people are if they refer to condemnation; however, the striking issue here is that there are multitudes who make this claim alongside the claim that they are already born-again Christians. The oddity here being that this claim is typically made when a brother or sister in Christ attempts to lovingly bring to light a sin or non-Christlike action, activity, or participation thereof in similar form that the self-professed believer has been engaged, or is currently engaging in.

As can be seen in the passage from Matthew 7, it is apparent that these persons are clinging to a *prima facia* reading of Jesus's statement that one should not judge another person lest they risk falling under [implied divine] judgment themselves (*ref.* vv. 1-2). Used as a "proof-text" defense when confronted about what might be called unrepentant sin, this usage fails to account for the context given both in verses 3-5 *and* the total context of this portion of

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<sup>13</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 165-6.



Matthew's gospel.<sup>14</sup> Further still, this type of usage places a clear spotlight on the postmodern mindset at work in that this person is taking what may be subjectively viewed as the "saving" verse here and leaving out the context of the passage in favor of that which benefits them in the present moment. This begs many questions related to what Jesus was really saying within this passage, some of which will be touched on below.

### **According to Text: Christ's Mandate**

Before getting into the details of this passage, it is important to establish context for the statements herein. The passage itself can be grouped into three segments: [1] an admonition concerning judgment of those who are not believers; [2] appropriate and righteous judgement of those who are; and [3] a reiteration concerning what may be viewed as a caution against perpetual pursuit of restoring a believer, or otherwise, when it has become obvious that they will not receive the message.<sup>15</sup>

So, from the outset of Christ's statement here it is evident that one should not "judge, that you be not judged," with the word judge being translated as with the prior exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 5 from the Greek κρίνω (*krinō*); however, in the context of the first segment of this passage (vv. 1-2), it is apparent that the judgment to which Jesus is referring is one of an declarative absolutism being both righteous and/or condemnatory in nature – a level of judgment of mankind which should be reserved for God alone.<sup>16</sup> As was seen discussed by Paul in 1

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<sup>14</sup> "The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition: New Testament*, by Kenneth L. Barker, and John R. Kohlenberger (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), pt. 6. [http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/zonebaet/the\\_gospel\\_of\\_the\\_kingdom\\_3\\_1\\_7\\_29/0?institutionId=5072](http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/zonebaet/the_gospel_of_the_kingdom_3_1_7_29/0?institutionId=5072).

<sup>15</sup> Note: The third segment here (v. 6) being debatable as there are many views – scholarly and otherwise – which point to different areas of focus [e.g. – speaking of believers specifically, speaking of hyperbolic exaggeration, or other similar literary functions].

<sup>16</sup> Danker and Krug, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 208.

Corinthians 5:9-13, the second part (v. 2) of this first segment (Matt. 7:1-2) would certainly appear to be a caution against condemning another who, for lack of a better phrase, does not necessarily know any better – a non-believer.<sup>17</sup> That said, it likewise indicates the nature of mercy inherent in the Lord Jesus in that which is unspoken in that segment – that those who do not know and those who may have heard, are not yet condemned (Jn. 12:47).<sup>18</sup>

Moving into the second segment of this passage (vv. 3-5), there is a change of pace in that Jesus now talks about how one interacts with “your brother.” As was also discussed concerning 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, the word brother utilized here comes from the Greek ἀδελφός (*adelphos*) and is again used – according to Danker – as a contextual reference to those who share “common interests and activities”;<sup>19</sup> ergo, a fellow believer. So, the analogy used by Christ within these three verses can additionally be broken down into a tripart set of observations. First, that Christ begins by addressing those who sit in quiet judgment of a fellow believer (v. 3); second, those who speak openly concerning the faults of a fellow believer without regard to their own faults in the same area (v. 4); and thirdly, the proper action to be taken in the case that one notices a straying by a fellow believer (v. 5). Respectively then, the interpretation of this segment as a whole follows that should sin be noted in the life of a fellow believer, one should first self-examine themselves as it relates to that sin in their own life before attempting to address or discuss the issue with that brother or sister (vv. 3-4);<sup>20</sup> and, in so doing, one can faithfully care

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<sup>17</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 162-3; see also: Barker and Kohlenberger, *The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)*, pt. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Note: That those who are merciful will be judged mercifully and those who are critical will be judged critically – a topic which may be bookmarked for future study.

<sup>19</sup> Danker and Krug, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Barker and Kohlenberger, *The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)*, pt. 6a.

for their fellow believer without hypocrisy (v. 5). So, in short, there should – again – be an accountability [judging] amongst believers.

The third segment (v. 6), is the subject of some debate. That said, this writer’s application of the text coincides with the systematic context of the prior segments. Meaning, Christ has given the metaphorical formula for careful care for those outside the body and for righteous accountability amongst believers (v. 1-5); but that does not mean that such Godly wisdom will always be well received in either context (v. 6). So, this single verse would seem to imply that Christ reiterates that: [1] what is holy – the truths revealed by God regarding sin – should not be *bluntly* given to those who do not believe, “do not give what is holy to the dogs” (v. 6a); [2] that correction – “pearls” of Godly wisdom – should not be dispensed to those who will not [or, refuse to] receive them [believers], “nor cast your pearls before swine” (v. 6b); and [3] that there is risk in so doing because those same persons, within or outside, may respond by destroying [used loosely] the wisdom given and/or the one giving it (v. 6c).<sup>21</sup>

### **Concerning Scholarly Positions**

Moving forward, this segment will analyze the work of two scholars on both Matthew 7 and 1 Corinthians 5, respectively. Specifically, each analysis will consist of a succinct summative take on the peer-reviewed work’s content and include comparison of the main premises of those works with the prior exegetical discoveries made for each related passage. In covering these items, it is hoped that there will be evidence – as mentioned – that there must be some form of unity and/or disunity evident in the position of evangelical scholars when lined up with those same biblical passages, and that this is pertinent for the layperson today.

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<sup>21</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, and John R. Kohlenberger, *The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)*, pt. 6b.

### T. J. Bennett on Matthew 7:6

Though Bennett's examination pertains – with a distinct focus – to verse 6 of Matthew 7:1-6, it is important to note that he draws the reader's attention to a misconception about the verse itself in light of what this writer would call the *totality of the circumstances*.<sup>22</sup> This totality implies that the verse in question is not standalone *per se*, but that it does tie into the distinct relational context of the prior section (v. 1-5). According to Bennett, this tie-in is on the grounds of emphasis through clear comparison – being of persons to both “dogs” and “swine.”<sup>23</sup> That said, he is clear to establish that Christ did not use this language to belittle the persons to whom he referred, but that “to the eyes of the beholder” those persons would seem as such.<sup>24</sup> As it stands, Bennett seems to agree with the contextual exegesis of the total passage in that Christ was making clear that judgment of another is to be cautioned against generally – whether “dog” or swine,” but should there be need to do so it should be done with careful consideration both in the introspective and consequential sense.<sup>25</sup> Admittedly, Bennett does not go into explicit detail regarding the correlation of verses 1-5 and verse 6, nor does he draw the exact same conclusions related to judgment; this seeing as he interprets the passage to exhibit both irony and sarcasm. That said, the relationship between the two is clearly evident in the context – as Bennett was keen to point out, nonetheless.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Note: A phrase borrowed from common law enforcement training; meaning the sum total of the context of a situation, incident, or event at the time it took place. This most typically being an invoked phrase when adjudicating a case or when attempting to examine the scenario after the fact.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas J. Bennett, “Matthew 7:6 – A New Interpretation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49, no. 2 (1987): 377, 379. <https://www-galaxie-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/wtj49-2-05>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 379-80.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 381-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 383-4.

B. S. Rosner on 1 Corinthians 5

From the outset, it is obvious that “holiness” is a key factor in Rosner’s study on 1 Corinthians 5, verses 9-13 being necessarily included in the contextual whole. What is demonstrated by Rosner in this article is that there is a clear comparison taking place between the temple of the Old Testament and the Christian church of the New Testament – again, with “holiness” being the operative function in chapter 5 for the call for “expulsion of the sinner.”<sup>27</sup> It is within Rosner’s discussion here that it is evidenced that much as the temple was to be *kept* holy by the congregation, so too must the church as the body of believers constituting the “new” temple hold one another accountable to the faith in order to preserve the holiness of the same – Rosner making the clear statement toward the end of his discourse that “...the most fundamental reason for the expulsion of the sinner in 5:1-13: the sinner must be ‘destroyed’ because he has defiled the holiness of God’s temple, the church.”<sup>28</sup> So, this contextual application given by Rosner seems to line up nearly identically to the exegetical work on the passage of 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 in that there is emphasis on that which is a part of the “temple” [church body] to remain holy and that there must be judgment in the sense that it is imperative to do so for the sake of not oneself, but for God’s namesake and according to His standard.<sup>29</sup> So, this marks yet another area of distinct scholarly agreeance with the points made regarding these passages.

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<sup>27</sup> Brian S. Rosner, “Temple and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 5,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no. 1 (1991): 137-44. <https://www-galaxie-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/tynbul42-1-08>.

<sup>28</sup> Rosner, *Temple and Holiness*, 144-5.

<sup>29</sup> Note: Notwithstanding the facts presented here, and though it is obvious that the context indicates congruity between holiness and casting out the “evil person,” there is – again – no specific mentioning of verses 9-13 in Rosner’s discussion as he takes on 1 Corinthians 5 in light of Paul’s exhortations in 1 Corinthians 3 – another topic worthy of its own research.

## Scripture: Un-Skewed

For this segment it is imperative to outline why all the above points to the significance of unity, cohesion, and authoritative function in terms of Scripture. To do so, an additional two articles will be synthesized to point to that goal. This is of utmost importance in that within the above there has been a demonstration of the discontinuity between cultural trend and Scriptural authority, applicability, and unity.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, this segment may help to outline that even the layperson can work to recognize, understand, and apply the Scriptures in their daily lives – regardless of the skewing that has taken place.

### N. G. Awad on *Sola Scriptura*: A Reference to Cohesiveness and Unity

The discourse put forth by Awad concerning *Sola Scriptura* is one of clear detail and pointed articulation; however, before engaging any further it must be pointed out that this writer disagrees with Awad, but only insofar as the claim is made that postmodern theological trends are not a challenge to the *sola scriptura* principle outright.<sup>31</sup> That now said, the majority of Awad's writing is wonderfully written in that throughout the entire discourse there is a clear focus on the unity of the body found not only through common liturgical and evangelical practices, but likewise through cohesivity in exegetical hermeneutics amongst biblical scholars. The idea is posited that Scripture is in-fact from whence the basis comes from, but that in action it is carried out – leaving no metaphorical stone unturned when it comes to proper and faithful interpretation and application of the biblical text;<sup>32</sup> with Awad appearing to have a penchant for

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<sup>30</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 43-85, 111-24; see also: J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 115-235.

<sup>31</sup> Najeeb George Awad, "Should We Dispense with *Sola Scriptura*? Scripture, Tradition and Postmodern Theology," *Dialog* 47, no. 1 (2008): 64-5. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/j.1540-6385.2008.00368.x>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-71.

the applicative aspect. The passage about being “doers,” not just “hearers” comes to mind (Jas. 1:22).

From this vantage point, it seems obvious that Awad stands alongside others in that a proper recognition, interpretation, and application of biblical truths is imperative, yet to do so one must consider – through exegetical study and unified historical interpretive understanding – all that the biblical lens has to offer – this notwithstanding Awad’s stance on postmodern cultural influence in that regard.<sup>33</sup> Overall, Awad positions Scripture as authoritative, clear, and authentic;<sup>34</sup> however, it is likewise made clear that the Spirit and the work of the body help to further those same truths of Scripture. This leaves the reader to consider that Scripture must be the special foundation upon which the Christian – through the work of the Spirit – may expound faithfully to reach others and to know how to *live*.

#### E. W. Goodrick on 2 Timothy 3:16-17

So, now having come to this portion, the final sentence above leads the reader to the most obvious – and perhaps necessarily conscientious conclusion. That conclusion being much as is given in Goodrick’s conclusion of 2 Timothy 3:16, that “Scripture, alive as it is with the vitality of God Himself, is valuable for indoctrinating people, for rebuking people who should know better, for correcting people who do not, for guiding people, so that God’s man can be completely equipped for every good work.”<sup>35</sup> The primary premise of Goodrick’s entire writing is to bring forward the realization that a reaffirmation amongst the church body today concerning the clarity, authority, and applicability of the Scriptures – amidst the present shifting persuasions

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<sup>33</sup> Awad, *Sola Scriptura*, 71-2.

<sup>34</sup> Awad, *Sola Scriptura*, 72-6; see also: DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word*, 27-42.

<sup>35</sup> Edward W. Goodrick, “Let’s Put 2 Timothy 3:16 Back in the Bible,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 4 (1982): 486. <https://www-galaxie-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/jets25-4-11>.

of common [postmodernist] culture and its inherent worldview – is absolutely necessary; and, more still, that this “re-inclusion” of 2 Timothy 3:16 is tantamount to preserving and persevering in the faith insomuch as the focus of the passage – according to Goodrick – is on the singular word “useful,” from the Greek *ōphelimos*.<sup>36</sup> Simply said, the need here is that there must be a recognition that the Scriptures are useful in their *whole context*, an refreshed understanding of those Scriptures without cultural presuppositions, and then a willing reignition of purposeful application of those truths in daily life for all who would claim the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>36</sup> Goodrick, *Put 2 Timothy 3:16 Back*, 480-6; see also: Bruce M. Metzger and Zondervan Staff (Eds.), *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Christian Publishing, 2016), 563-71. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=5397844>.



### Conclusion[s] and Future Study

In summary, this paper has treated the topic of the postmodern skew of Scripture, and has demonstrated that despite such skew there is a hope to return to the truth of the Scriptural whole through proper examination [exegesis and/or biblical hermeneutics] despite those cultural presuppositions which have clouded the context of Scripture. In that, the two areas which were chosen to address were addressed as such: [1] postmodern thoughts concerning spirituality/religion were identified through defining the specific relationship to this topic; [1] careful analysis from both the postmodernist view and exegetical view was conducted over two select passages concerning the sub-topic of biblical judgment – being both God’s, and that mandated by Him for believers; [3] scholarly works were examined for continuity of interpretation and applicative aspects – these were found to be congruous to the biblical exegesis conducted by this writer; and [4] an overall thematic element of Scriptural authority, despite the postmodern view, was discussed as an element which appears to have been missing from the layperson’s repertoire of Christian understanding, and can therefore be said to be a, if not *the*, causation for this issue.<sup>37</sup>

Conclusively, the emphasis upon the issue that there has been an clear and direct departure from a truly biblical-theological understanding of what the Scriptures say concerning the “hot topics” of postmodern culture today has been well illuminated – even if only through this singular sub-topic of judgment. The erroneous teaching of “Love. Don’t Judge,” though surely well-intentioned, is not an accurate teaching when one applies the whole of what Scripture offers regarding that subject. As has been said before, sometimes truly loving someone is saying the things that may hurt the most when it is desperately needed – that is not judgment.

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<sup>37</sup> DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word*, 71-94.

Truthfully, based upon the understanding given through reference resources and that of peer-reviewed scholarship on the example topic covered, it is safe to say that both Christ and Paul were not leading believers to a place where they simply ignored or by way of avoidance condoned that which was ungodly, unholy, or generally sinful; they were in-fact encouraged to first self-examine regarding those things and then to gently and, again, lovingly exhort and admonish others to see the error of their ways and to turn to Christ for forgiveness and salvation. So, in terms of postmodern skew, this important – and still very pertinent – command to truly *love* others has been forgotten, replaced, and misappropriated. The examples given in the exegetical section both demonstrate this and show the reader how one can accurately examine through brief word studies the whole truth of the passage[s] in question.<sup>38</sup>

Obviously, this is a mere scratching of the surface when it comes to postmodern presuppositional skew of biblical, spiritual, and generally religious items. As it stands, this writer would posit that for future study, other than those areas mentioned within the footnotes of this paper, that one examine the outlying problem that this precipitates from – the lack of pastoral attention to the theological and exegetical details of God’s word. After all, it is the pastor/teacher who should be loving, feeding, and caring for the proverbial flock[s].

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<sup>38</sup> Duvall, and Hays. *Grasping God’s Word*, 23-114.

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