

**`See' not `read' is
the word for this
generation.**

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

**Postmodern means to
be open to mystery
and to regard
the supernatural
as plausible.**

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

**Spirituality is in.
Specific claims about
spirituality are out...**

**Spirituality is in.
Specific claims about
Jesus are out...**

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

The post-Christian culture
is a culture of "many gods"
that rejects absolutes.

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

JUST DO IT!

MIKE SUGGESTS THAT THEIR PRODUCTS
OFFER AN EXPERIENCE.

EXPERIENCE IS THE PRIMARY NEED OF THE
GENERATIONS THAT WILL LIVE WELL INTO
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

**POSTMODERNS
ARE NOT LOOKING FOR
INFORMATION
ABOUT GOD.
WE ARE SUFFERING
FROM AN INFORMATION
OVERLOAD.**

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

**THIS GENERATION IS LOOKING
FOR AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD,
AND THEY DON'T EXPECT TO
FIND GOD IN CHURCH.**

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

**THE age OF
Literacy WAS a
SHIFT FROM VISUAL
IMAGERY, FEELING.**

Electronic media are
a life or death issue
for the church
because electronic
media are the
language of our
culture.

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

Postmoderns live out
of a sense of rhythm,
vibration and experience.

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

POSTMODERNS HAVE
A DEEP
FELT NEED TO
BE ANCHORED IN A
SPIRITUAL REALITY.

Michael Slaughter, *Out On The Edge*, Abingdon, 1998.

In the post-modern, information-age culture of the twenty-first century, people will go to those churches that offer them an experience of God that lifts them beyond their everyday existence. In an “edu-tainment” world, filled with images and sound-bites, everyday experience will be hard to match, except in one way: the live, hands-on experience of worshipping the living God in a community of faith, and being part of a faithful assembly of people who pray, care, and build a relationship with you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century

Daniel Benedict & Craig Miller

In a narrow sense, contemporary worship is a phenomenon of our time. On first impressions, contemporary worship seems to be a movement fixed on the new, on the relevant, on the technologically savvy, and on outreach to seekers and to the disenchanting.

In a broader sense,... contemporary worship is a recovery of what is best in the worship of all ages... Worship patterns have always been in a state of dynamic and ongoing change...

“What occurs is ceaseless adaptation, revision, cyclic storage, and retrieval. Material in one age that is unused, underused, or lost to sight is in another rediscovered, re-possessed, and put back into service.” [Daniel Hawkins]

Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century

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The archaic is not obsolete; it is to the human story what the unconscious is to the human psyche. Tapping the archaic is to release unrecognised reservoirs of memory...

Christian worship, it must not be forgotten, is deep *anamnesis*, remembering.

Aidan Kavanagh

There is a sense... in which the cultural needs of each generation are really quite similar. Every generation needs to hear the good news that God is with us in the cultural medium of its own language-of-the-heart.

Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century

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Preaching in contemporary North American culture is increasingly visual in its imagery and imagistic in its content. The various approaches representing the new homiletics emphasize the role of the image in the language of preaching. (In fact, one of the hermeneutic issues of this day in preaching is the cost of translating an *oral* text of biblical narrative into a visual presentation of sermonic imagery.) Under the impact of the visual media in general – and, it seems, TV commercials in particular – some preachers have fallen into the pitfall of adopting a kind of pulpit language that resembles the soft drink or automobile ads. Images come tumbling out, diverse, seemingly unarranged, far too many for the hearers to process or recall.

Richard Eslinger, *Pitfalls in Preaching*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996.

What would happen to the worship I prepared if I looked at it differently? What if I saw the task not as a mechanical, logical, modernist one of putting stuff in the right order so that it 'progressed' through a form to give a predetermined message with an anticipated outcome, but instead saw myself more like a curator of an art gallery? A curator who considers the space and environment as well as the content of worship and who takes these elements and puts them in a particular arrangement, considering juxtaposition, style, distance, light, shade, and so on. A maker of a context for worship rather than a presenter of content. A provider of a frame inside which the elements are arranged and rearranged to convey a particular message for a particular purpose. A message that may or may not be overtly obvious, may or may not be similar to the message perceived by another worshipper.

So instead of Worship-Leader, or Worship-Planner, I become an artist, a framer, a reframer, a recontextor, a curator of worship. I provide contexts, experiences for others to participate in.

Mike Riddell (et al), *The Prodigal Project*, SPCK, London 20000.

The images always present the viewer with multiple meanings (they are inherently multivalent), meanings that are not susceptible to precisely articulated propositions...

[The] multivalence of images has to do with their character as objects of perception. Visual images possess in inherent ambiguity a “floating chain of signifieds” within some sort of “spectrum of meanings”. Anyone seeking to interpret imagery, then, is presented with the challenge of locating the width of its meaning spectrum along with *possible* denotations within the spectrum. The interpreter must realise all the while... that any given meaning of an image is never exhaustive or authoritative over other possible meanings.

Richard Eslinger, *Narrative and Imagination*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995, citing Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1985.

Pictures are presentations of experience, not commentary about experience. Thus the TV curriculum is largely irrefutable. You can dislike television programs, but you cannot disagree with them... Such words as “true” and “false” come out of a different universe of symbolism altogether. They are applicable to the world of exposition, in which we confront statement and counter-statement, hypotheses, reasons, refutations, contradictions, explanations, verifications – above all, where we confront ideas expressed in the form of subjects and predicates... Television is a world dominated by stories, usually accompanied by music and segmented into - eight-minute modules, that call for visceral, not cortical, responses.

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Penguin, New York, 1985.

In the postmodern world, the image is the primary unit of cultural currency. In the modern world, preachers exegeted words to make points. In the postmodern world, preachers must learn how to exegete images to create experiences. Preachers are connoisseurs of biblical images, for it is the image that fixes the subject in postmoderns' mind and memory...

One "illustrates" points. One "animates" experiences... Postmoderns rely on emotions for evidence, metaphors for truth, and myth for direction. Postmoderns live in metaphors and dwell in parables. They have a highly developed visual sense...

In preaching, we still think that people are moved by impeccable logic, powerful reason, and scientific thinking... Preachers must learn how to body forth their sermons...

Worship is the art of transcendence-releasing...

"For worship in the 21st century, if you can say it all with words, you've missed the point!" [quoting Easum & Bandy]

Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1999.

Because of what computers commonly do, they place an inordinate emphasis on the technical processes of communication and offer very little in the way of substance. With the exception of electric light, there has never been a technology that better exemplifies Marshall McLuhan's aphorism "The medium is the message." The computer is almost all process. There are, for example, no "great computers," as there are great writers, painters or musicians. There are "great programs" and "great programmers," but their greatness lies in their ingenuity either in simulating a human function or in creating new possibilities of calculation, speed and volume... [For] the moment, computer technology functions more as a new mode of transportation than as a new means of substantive communication.

Neil Postman, *Technopoly*, Vintage Books, New York, 1993.

The electronic media... work in subtle ways to disconnect audiences from local communities and traditional ways of life. In fact, some of the most avid consumers of the electronic media have little or no sense of how they relate to the broader culture or to previous generations. By means of this “bias”, the electronic media have produced an actual “generation gap.” ... [Many] young people are anchored in a specialised media world, a youth subculture, that gives their lives meaning but at the same time distances them from their own family life. Often all that really remains of strong personal relationships is the peer group, which is immersed in the same electronic environment.

Quentin Schultze et al, *Dancing in the Dark*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1991.

As Christianity moves into a forming culture, there is often a venturesome theologian, a person such as Augustine or Luther, who will move out of a contrapuntal posture and constructively reformulate the faith in very new ways... During formative periods, preaching speaks freely in popular language, language close to everyday speech, and reaches out in search of analogies to explain traditional Christian doctrine in a new way... So, as a cultural formation begins to come together, preachers must seek a new, “two-way” metaphor; metaphor to convey God’s mysterious grace and, at the same time, human experiences of sin and liberation. Christian preaching must play on “the edges of language” where metaphor brings out redefinitions of human experience... Homiletic form is usually experimental, because preachers are developing rhetoric to match the shape of a new, forming human consciousness.

David Buttrick, *A Captive Voice*, Westminster/John Knox, Louisville, 1994.

In spite of our abundance
of information, or maybe
partly because of it, the
West has great difficulty
in finding its bearings amid
contemporary events.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Our failure to place affection and empathy at the centre of the educational process says something very grave about us, and I do not think it will be of much value for us to persevere unless we can learn to love our technology less and ourselves more...”

Neil Postman

Before you become too entranced with gorgeous gadgets and mesmerising video displays, let me remind you that information is not knowledge, knowledge is not wisdom and wisdom is not foresight. Each grow out of the other and we need them all.

Arthur C. Clarke

Ritual is a social drama which embodies the experience of a community. It is through the repetition of these symbolic actions that we evoke the feeling of the primordial event, which initially called the community into being, with such power that it effects a contemporary presence at that event. In other words, through the intuitional mode of consciousness, ritual re-presents revelation.

John Westerhoff, 'Contemporary Spirituality: Revelation, Myth and Ritual', in G. Durka and J. Smith, *Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education*, Paulist Press, New York, 1979.

Stories are fundamentally oral and communal in nature.

They are meant to be told, dramatised, sung, danced, and expressed through visual arts... In an oral culture.., learning involves all the senses and the imagination as well.

In an oral culture truth is poetic, and storytelling is understood as the doorway into the realm of the sacred..

The biblical story becomes a sacred story that is to be imagined and participated in, not studied objectively...

John Westerhoff, *A Pilgrim People*, Seabury Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

Stories are concrete and particular. They are not expressions of doctrine or universal truth. Stories are open-ended... Stories stimulate the imagination. There is not only one interpretation of a story; indeed, the listener is encouraged to listen freely and discover personal meaning. Stories are experiential...

The Bible story is a symbolic narrative... It offers meaning on varying levels and enriches our lives in countless ways. The meaning of each story will change at different times in our lives; insights will vary, depending on our needs and experiences at the moment.

John Westerhoff, *A Pilgrim People*, Seabury Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

The church is a story-formed community... Baptism is our adoption into a story, God's re-creative story, which is recorded in the community's story book (the Holy Scriptures), incarnate in the community's life, and made present through its sacramental rituals, especially the Holy Eucharist. Each of us also has a story. To each community Eucharist we bring our stories and re-enact God's story so that God's story and our stories may be made one story. In the context of our liturgies we are initiated into God's story and we appropriate its significance for our lives so that it might influence our common life day by day... Our most important and fundamental task as Christians is to learn God's story.

John Westerhoff, *A Pilgrim People*, Seabury Press, Minneapolis, 1984.

CHURCHES in post-modern
communities will be built,
not around great preachers, but
around great experiences.

Harvey Cox calls the new mode of spirituality experimentalism, and says it is emotional, communal, narrational, hopeful, and radically embodied.

IMAGES ARE BRIDGES
THROWN OUT TOWARDS
AN INVISIBLE SHORE.

CARL JUNG

The church is preoccupied with problems of meaning when the culture is very little concerned with meaning. What preoccupies post-modern culture is the quest for experience, especially experience with a purpose, and revelling in full sensory immersion rituals, signs and symbols that connect to the divine.

I learnt in seminary how to craft sermons.
I am learning now how to craft experiences.
Postmodern preachers are visual poets,
experts in kinetic and kinaesthetic worship
where bodily knowings are acknowledged
and affirmed.

Leonard Sweet