

Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh,
Truth is Stranger Than It Used To Be
Chapter Seven: "Reality Isn't What It's Meant to Be"

1. What is the nature of a postmodern person longing for home, according to Douglas Adams, a/theologian Mark Taylor, Trudy the bag lady? 144

Longing for a home which doesn't exist, wanderer, drifter, attached to no home. It is a culture of radical homelessness.

2. Why is the postmodern world a world of radical homelessness? 146

- Any notion of the world is a social construction.
- Because of the violence of our constructed worldview over against others.
- Because of the destruction of the environment by this socially constructed and violent worldview.

3. What five things do Walsh and Middleton do in this chapter? 146

1. Contrast a biblical view of creation as an extravagant and eloquent gift of the creator with the mute nature construed by both modern and postmodern anthropocentrism.
2. Develop the theme of the goodness of creation over against the aggressive mastery of realism and hyperreality.
 3. How the biblical story addresses postmodern homelessness.
 4. Address questions of anomie in the light of the covenantal understanding of creation order.

4. In response to the postmodern concern of responsiveness and hearing the cries of the “other,” Walsh and Middleton formulate the biblical understanding of the nature of the world as creation in relation to God by covenant. What are the essential features of their discussion of the covenantal nature of the world of creation? 148

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5. How do Walsh and Middleton respond to the accusations of someone like Richard Rorty who would argue that this biblical view of creation is just another social or religious construction of reality, a “mere incantation”?
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They don't seek to defend it rationally or apologetically. They seem content to tell the story they believe as a story that is an answer to anthropocentric mastery and exploitation and in fulfillment of the important

pomo sentiment of listening to the voice of the other, even the creation itself.

6. In what way does the biblical notion of the primordial goodness of creation offer a response to the ontology of violence that seems to be at the root of violent attempts to control and dominate a threatening and chaotic nature? 152ff

The biblical view is that the creation is an expression of the extravagant love of the creator, not as a result of conflict among gods, a divine battle with evil. The key point is A BIBILCAL WORLD VIEW WILL GRANT NO ONTOLOGICAL STANDING OR PRIORITY TO EVIL OR VIOLENCE.

Creation begins with an ontology of peace, and sees evil as an intruder. Before the chaos of Babel, there is a creational symphony. And it entails wonderful diversity, cohering together, ecologically related, singing praises to God. And the creation ends in covenant of peace in which the world is restored and fruitful in the eschaton as well.

7. How does this vision of a good creation respond to the question of postmodern homelessness? 155ff

When we experience exile as in pomo, here the biblical story can speak most eloquently of being at home in a secure creation. It revolves around the themes of WILDERNESS, THE DEUTERONOMIC NOTIONS OF REMEMBERING AND FORGETING, THE POOR, ISRAELI KINGSHIP, TEMPLE, EXILE, HOMECOMING AND KINGDOM IN JESUS. The key is in the rejection of the world of grasping and the world as gift to be received.

8. How does the notion of biblical creation order respond to the problem of postmodern anomie? 162ff

There are orders, limits, and boundaries within which humanness is possible and beyond these there can only be trouble. There is an ordered quality to life that will not be mocked. This order comes as a gift of God who gives order and brings about liberation in the face of imperially oppressive order that is imposed. The key concept is SHALOM. Yet order is given by God, but also human task, esp. in culture building. It is a kind of order that is imposed, however, that recognizes the problem of pain, embraces it, and seeks redemption.

9. What are the implications of the view of creation for the problem of postmodern constructivist epistemology? What is the contrast worked out between "critical realism" and a covenantal epistemology of gift and call? 165ff

