

Challenges and Possibilities for the Adventist Church in a Post-Christian Culture

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Norwegian Bible Institute
Beograd, Aug 30, 2024



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Integrating biblical faith into today's world



Challenges and possibilities

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Does our faith relate to real life?



"My wife just left me, I lost my job, I need surgery, and my spirits have hit bottom? Pastor, you've gotta help me. What's the difference between pre-, post-, and amillennialism?"

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Is our theology addressing the real world?

We are not theologians because we are particularly religious. We are theologians because in the face of this world, we miss God.


Jürgen Moltmann



Challenges and possibilities

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This presentation is NOT the final answer


One contribution to a conversation? A vision?

A proposal?


Challenges and possibilities

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Different approaches to the "problem"



SPIRITUAL MODEL
Problem: evil forces in play
Solution: pray, read bible, convert



SOCIETAL MODEL
Problem: society changes
Solution: understand and adapt



HOLISTIC MODEL
Problem: both spiritual / societal
Solution: both spiritual / societal

Challenges and possibilities

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Outline



About the post-Christian culture
What are some of the characteristics and challenges?



Ways to connect
What are some of the possibilities to connect?



Ways to convey
How can we relaunch the biblical message for this culture?

Challenges and possibilities

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About the post-Christian culture

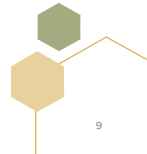
Challenges and possibilities

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The post-Christian culture: an overview

Main characteristic: fragmentation – no longer a single narrative
 Desacralization and resacralization - simultaneously
 Some people are «vaccinated» against Christian faith
 Christian faith is typically unwelcome in the public sphere
 Christian faith is typically viewed as the opposite of science = unrational

Challenges and possibilities



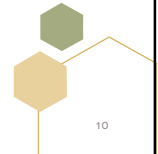
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The post-Christian culture: an overview

Christian faith may be viewed as suppressive and inhibiting
 Many do not commit to one particular «faith package»
 Authorities needs to qualify as authorities
 Common traits on the philosophy of life:
 YOLO, FOMO, be authentic, realise yourself

Challenges and possibilities



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REFLECTION

What are some of your thoughts on what a post-Christian culture is?

Challenges and possibilities



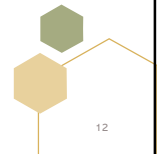
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Four post-Christian «longings»

ROOTS – we chopped off the one we had
 WISE LIVING – we found the christian wisdom wanting
 MEANING – «We have all we need, but that's all we have» (Ole Paus)
 HOPE – it is an item in demand nowadays

Challenges and possibilities



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Ways to connect

Challenges and possibilities

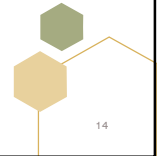
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What are humanity's real problems?

- Death and decay
- Moral incompetence
- Broken relationships
- Broken shalom
- Humanity's «lostness»
- Our home, the earth, is hurt and damaged

The Bible recognizes and addresses all these problems!



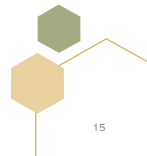
Challenges and possibilities

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Four crucial conversations to join

- Environmental issues
- Sustainability issues
- Issues of justice
- Issues of equality

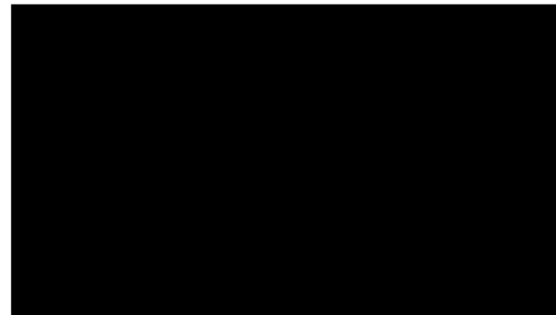


Challenges and possibilities

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United over a dying ocean-life

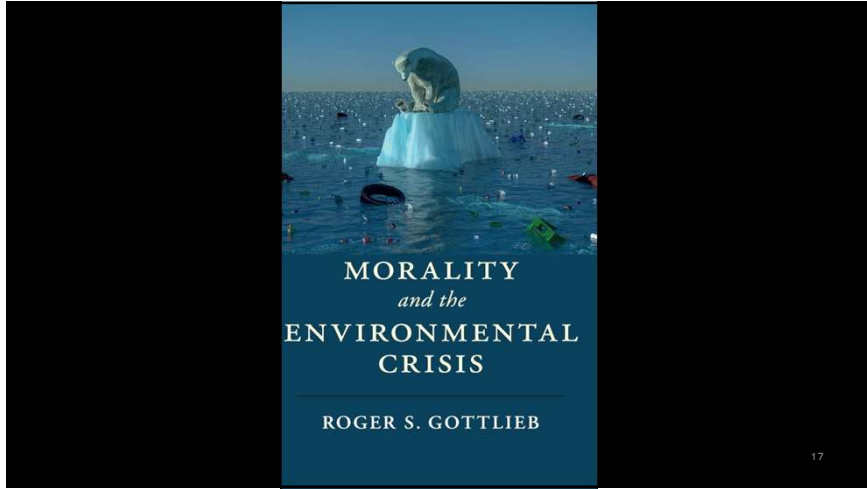


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsqFqjSQ7Qc>

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REFLECTION

In what ways is Biblically based environmentalism different from «mainstream» environmentalism?

How can the belief in the second coming lead to engagement and disengagement with the world?

Challenges and possibilities

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True sustainability?

24 “Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; 25 and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; 27 and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

Matthew 7:24-27

Presentation title

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A Powerful Framework to Spark Student Engagement

Article Tuesday, February 14, 2023

By Eric Liguori

Photo by iStock/PhotoStock-Studio

Effective altruism encourages students to challenge what they know about philanthropy as they explore ways to maximize their societal impact.

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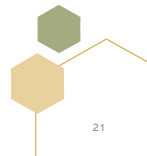
Article Tags

- [curriculum](#)
- [eig](#)
- [learner engagement](#)
- [societal impact](#)
- [sustainability](#)

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Three ways to connect

Sabbath-keeping as an ancient practise of compassion with fellow creatures
 Jesus as a life-guide – Christianity as a lifestyle
 The church as an existential community – handling life with others



Challenges and possibilities

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Sabbath-keeping

Provides deep roots - goes all the way back to creation
 Embodies a piece of Eden in the midst of our space and time
 Provides a sense of belonging - we are joining a tradition
 Provides a sense of identity - «we are created and believe in the Creator»
 Entails a compassion with fellow creatures (Deut 5:12-15)
 - Sons and daughters, slaves, animals and imigrants
 Represents a way of being human in the world (Luk 13:10-17)

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Jesus as life-guide – Christianity as lifestyle

Jesus presented himself as the «Way» (Joh 14:6)
 Early Christians were referred to as «those who the way» (Act 9:1-2)
 Early Christians depicted Jesus as a philopher – their guide to the good life alla Plato
 Jesus taught the disciples a lifestyle

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Christianity as lifestyle

Christianity is a lifestyle - a way of being in the world that is simple, non-violent, shared, and loving. However, we made it into an established 'religion' (and all that goes with that) and avoided the lifestyle change itself. One could be warlike, greedy, racist, selfish, and vain in most of Christian history, and still believe that Jesus is one's 'personal Lord and Saviour. The world has no time for such silliness anymore. The suffering on earth is too great.

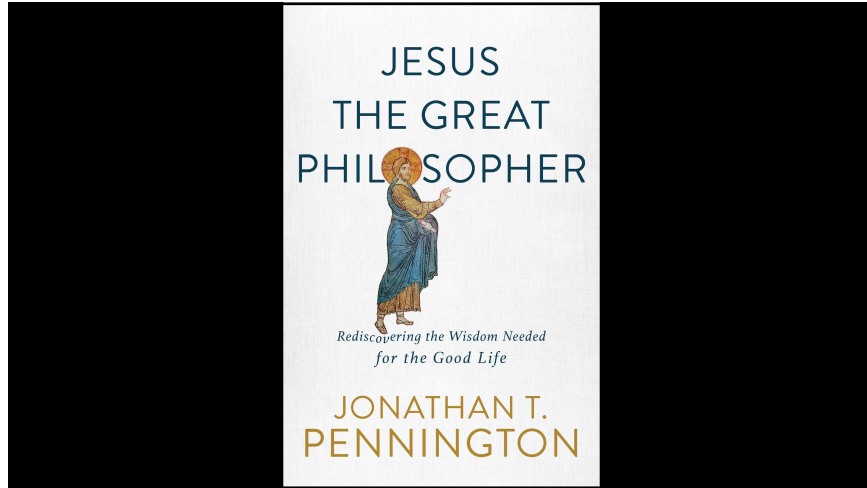


Richard Rohr

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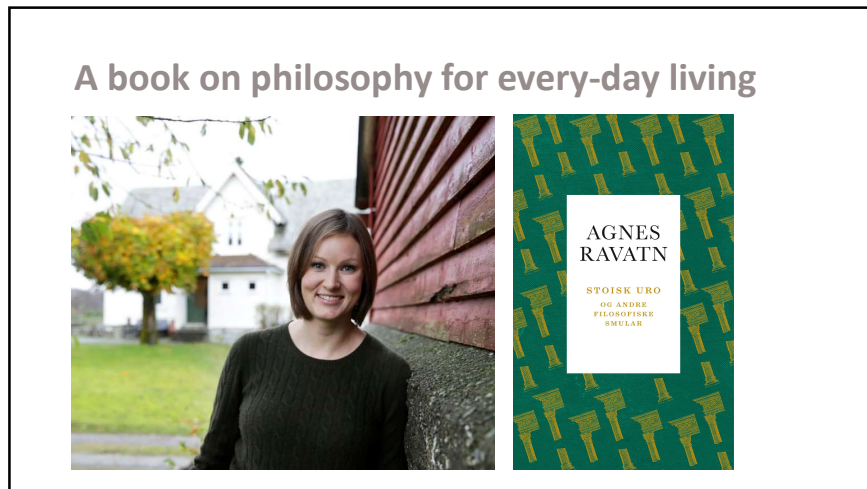
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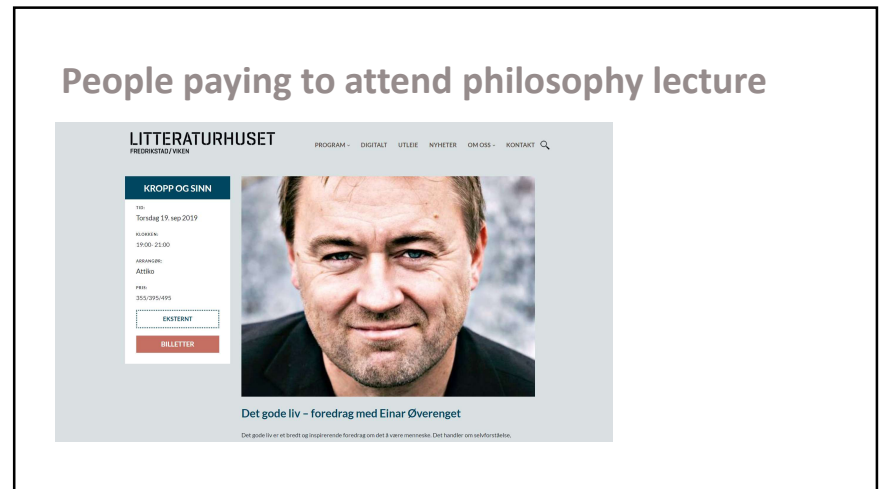
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Philosophy attractive at the University of Oslo

Khrono

Nyheter Om oss Studier +

Snart like vanskelig å komme inn på filosofi som medisin

Poenggrensene for opptak i fag som filosofi og idéhistorie øker. Ved Universitetet i Oslo nærmer ettårig filosofi seg medisingrensen.



Foto: Wikimedia Commons

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The church as a community for handling life

Lifestyle changes and growth have highest success rates when done with others

Many people are existentially lonely

The church can be a place to navigate life with others

The church can be an arena to become «good at» life it self

The church can be a place to grow as a person

The church as an «each other» - community

Challenges and possibilities

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Ways to convey

Challenges and possibilities

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Six areas of relaunching Christian faith

BIBLE – an existential community

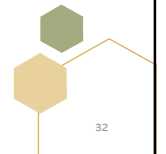
GOD – He is like Jesus!

SIN – a diagnosis of the world

SALVATION – healing of all creation

HOLY SPIRIT – a force of life is loose in the world!

HOPE – hope has a body!



Challenges and possibilities

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The BIBLE in universal language

The world is an incarnation of pure love - the Creator's love
 We come from a beautiful garden of shalom
 We were put here to make the garden bloom by filling it with God's wisdom, beauty and love
 We went our own way: we got ruined, we messed up, we got lost
 God has ever since called people to be «world-blooming agents»
 Jesus was the ultimate «world-bloom agent»
 Jesus came with directions, healing, life, mercy and a new start
 Jesus taught disciples to be «world-blooming agents» who taught others
 Restoration and re-creation of humanity and the world is coming

Challenges and possibilities

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All about God?

It's not all about God. It's about God's passion for life and relationships. He created life. He is passionate about preserving it. He created relationships, he is zealous about protecting them. That's the whole point about God's ethics. It's not for Him. It's for us.

Vidar Hovden in upcoming book



Challenges and possibilities

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GOD in universal language

God is the author and sustainer of all life
 God is the very substance of love
 God is a self-giving God
 God is God of the hurting and downtrodden
 God is like Jesus!
 God is passionately engaged in the world for life and healing

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SIN in universal language

Sin is the biblical term for all that is broken and dysfunctional in the world
 Sin is about being out of sync with the human purpose in this world
 Sin is about what deteriorates life and human beings
 Sin is about what breaks down our relations (to God, fellow men and creation)
 Sin is about what breaks down the world's original shalom
 Sin is what hinders the creator's intended «blooming of the world»
 Sin is about the forces of death in this world

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Wright's definition of sin

"The refusal of humans to play their part in God's purposes for creation as a whole."
 "A **vocational failure** as much as what we call a moral failure."

Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*

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Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home

God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made the eternal abode of the redeemed. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever." The time has come to which holy men have looked with longing since the flaming sword barred the first pair from Eden—the time for "the redemption of the purchased possession." The earth originally given to man as his kingdom, betrayed by him into the hands of Satan, and so long held by the mighty foe, has been brought back by the great plan of redemption.

Challenges and possibilities

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BJØRN STÆRK

Å SETTE VERDEN I BRANN

En ateist skriver om Jesus

HUMANIST FORLAG

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Atheist about sin

The Christians had both sin and salvation. We post-Christians have sin without salvation. Sin without mercy. That means trouble.



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Atheist about Dawkins' «enjoy life» campaign

«Enjoy your life» - atheists does not have anything to say to the demon planting its claws into their friend.... As a life-philosophy it's at the level of a deodorant advertisement.



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SALVATION in universal language

Salvation is God's move to heal and repair all that is broken and dysfunctional
 Salvation is about God getting us back in sync with our purpose in the world
 Salvation is about God restoring life and human beings
 Salvation is about God restoring our relations
 Salvation is about God restoring the original shalom in the world
 Salvation is about God making the world bloom again
 Salvation is about forces of life «invading» the world
 Salvation happened, happens, and will happen
 All God's actions of salvation will culminate in the re-creation of the world

Challenges and possibilities

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The vision ADRA - Norway

To serve humanity so all may live as God intended



Challenges and possibilities

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Restoring life

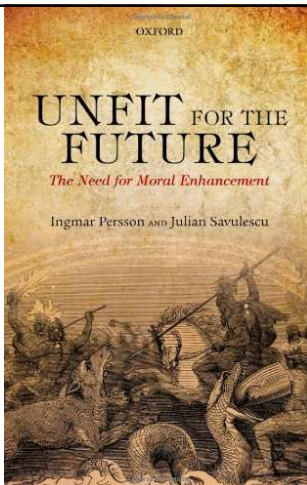
The mission of the Health Ministries department is to lead, equip and support Seventh-day Adventists in the Trans-European Division, as they engage in the restoration of life as God created it to be, through a compassionate service of comforting, relieving suffering, bringing healing, preventing illness, and enhancing life whenever possible to whoever needs it.



Challenges and possibilities

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THE HOLY SPIRIT in universal language

The Holy Spirit was an instrument in the creation of the world

The Holy Spirit is still a force for life in this world

The Holy Spirit works «love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control» in people (Gal 5:22-23)

The Holy Spirit is available to all who opens up and asks God for it

The Holy Spirit is the initial re-creation of the ultimate re-creation

Challenges and possibilities

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Biblical HOPE in universal language

The biblical hope is a hope of healing, restoring and re-creating

The biblical hope is for «new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells» (2 Pet 3:13)

Hope is happening already now through the Holy Spirit and people filled with him

Hope is made credible through

- 1) the resurrection of Jesus – death has already been conquered
- 2) the works of the Holy Spirit in individual humans
- 3) the works in the world by the community of Jesus-disciples through the Holy Spirit

Challenges and possibilities

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A New Heaven and a New Earth



Reclaiming
Biblical Eschatology

J. Richard Middleton

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N. T. Wright, Simply Christian

Made for spirituality, we wallow in introspection. Made for joy, we settle for pleasure. Made for justice, we clamor for vengeance. Made for relationship, we insist on our own way. Made for beauty, we are satisfied with sentiment. But new creation has already begun. The sun has begun to rise. Christians are called to leave behind, in the tomb of Jesus Christ, all that belongs to the brokenness and incompleteness of the present world ... That, quite simply, is what it means to be Christian: to follow Jesus Christ into the new world, God's new world, which he has thrown open before us.



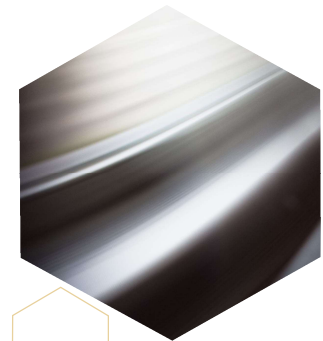
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Vidar Kristensen

Most people only understand who Jesus is, when one of his disciples draws near...



Challenges and possibilities

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