

## To Think About... postmodern/progressive Christianity

For most people today, absolute ideas no longer have a place. So-called “postmodern” people want to be more open than that, recognising that many ideas have value, and can perhaps be held alongside each other. The same goes for moral positions, which are judged more on particular circumstances than on rules that apply rigidly at all times.

Many Christian people also fall into this category. Today’s ways of thinking push us to approach Christian ideas, beliefs, and values differently.

Bishop Richard Holloway (in *Doubts and Loves*) points this out when he asks how we can judge between rival claims, when each of them presents their view as “the truth”: absolute and certain and the only right way.

He recognises that there are 3 main ways people approach Christian beliefs:

1. *naïve realism*, which has been the common approach for many people, assuming the words and ideas about God and being Christian literally represent “what is”;
2. *non-realism*, that sees words and ideas as expressing the meanings we humans put onto things like “God”, without such words relating to an actual “being”; and
3. *critical realism*, the approach often taken in science, that keeps an open mind, is not absolute and not tied to traditional understandings, but allows for a range of possibilities.

Holloway makes a push for the third of these. He says, “Critical realism would hold that there that which we call God, but that is encountered by humans in ways that are relative to their place in the universe... it is necessary to put religious claims to careful examination and interpretation.”