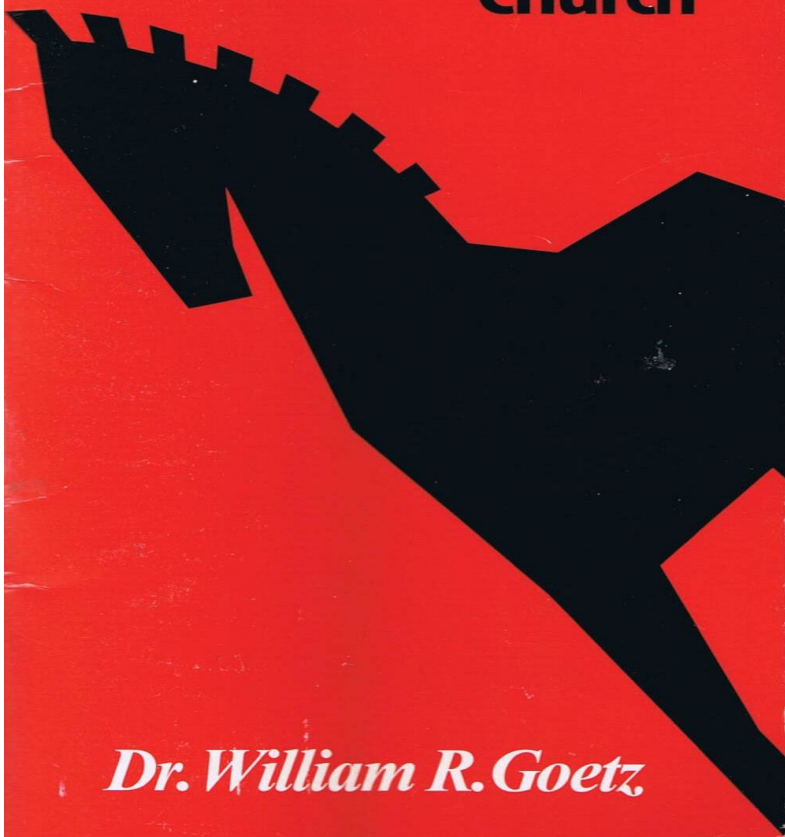


# THE EMERGENT CHURCH

## **WARNING!**

**A dangerous  
Trojan horse is  
creeping into  
the Evangelical  
Church**



*Dr. William R. Goetz*



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*Published by the*  
**CANADIAN REVIVAL FELLOWSHIP**  
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# **A SUBTLE TROJAN HORSE**

## ***SERIOUS ERROR INVADES EVANGELICAL CHURCH***

### **AN URGENT WARNING AND CALL TO PRAYER**

The Church—the Building, Body and Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ—has always been the object of Satan’s intense hatred and fierce attack. The enemy’s onslaughts have, and do, come in various ways such as:

- \* outright confrontation—frequently involving persecution and/or death for believers;
- \* periodic attacks by militant atheism;
- \* carnality, materialism and worldliness;
- \* false, careless or lazy shepherds, and
- \* false doctrine, usually couched in deceptive terms, with the messengers of Satan masquerading as angels of light.

History reveals that the enemy’s most effective strategy is the latter. Paradoxically, the Church has invariably grown in the face of persecution as “the blood of the martyrs has become the seed of the church.” On the other hand, the church has languished when doctrinal impurity and outright error has crept into her ranks.

Many careful observers of the current scene, particularly in the Western world, fear that today a dangerous ‘Trojan horse’ is being subtly introduced into not only the nominal church in general, but also (and far more seriously) into the evangelical wing of what is considered to be Christianity.

And tragically, this deception seems to be rapidly creeping in “under the radar” of many believers. Consequently, its invasion ap-

pears to be succeeding incredibly among evangelicals, with comparatively little awareness or opposition from those who profess to be committed to biblical truth. In fact, many respected Christian leaders, Bible training institutions and churches—long thought to be champions for and bastions of biblical orthodoxy—appear to be succumbing, to a greater or lesser degree, to the deception.

The legitimate need to find ways to relate meaningfully to what is being called the ‘post- modern’ generation has, I believe, created an opening for this ‘Trojan horse’ to enter. No thoughtful and concerned Christian who attempts to understand how dramatically and rapidly our world has changed in a myriad of areas, and particularly how younger people think differently than did past generations, would fail to acknowledge that the ways in which the Church seeks to evangelize and carry out the Great Commission must take into account our current culture.

Coupled with this need, and more significantly, there is undeniably very little evidence of genuine, joyful, vibrant Christian life to be found in the day-to-day experience of most members of most churches— including evangelical ones. The result is a deadly spiritual vacuum, which many rightly feel must be addressed. In addition, the pervasive influence of the post-modern cult of tolerance continues to undermine commitment to the “bigoted” truth of the gospel.

However, a rather unthinking acceptance of these facts, along with a willingness to accept proposed changes *without submitting them to the careful scrutiny of Scripture*, has created a potentially perilous situation. It is one which I feel is infinitely more deadly for the Church than welcoming the “horse” into their city was for the people of Troy.

The “Trojan horse” to which I refer is the incredibly widespread promotion and often uncritical acceptance of the underlying message of what is variously referred to as “the emerging church,” “The Emergent Village” or the “emergent conversation”—the latter a term which its proponents use quite extensively.

Though the above designations may be unfamiliar to you, particularly if you do not have occasion to be aware of current trends within evangelical circles, it is nevertheless quite possible that, to some degree, your local church is being affected. Such is the subtlety of the attack.

Let's briefly review the beginnings of this "movement," (if what is such a loosely connected network can be properly called a movement), describe what the various groups within emergent look like, examine the underlying message and some of the emergent church doctrinal positions, and then consider the grave dangers it poses.

## **BEGINNINGS**

Pastor Mark Driscoll, (who is a conundrum, as will be described later) was one of the early emergent leaders who has since distanced himself from some aspects of it. He sketches the early days:

In the mid-1990s I was a young church planter trying to establish a church in the city of Seattle when I got a call to speak at my first conference. It was hosted by Leadership Network and focussed on the subject of Generation X...Out of that conference a small team was formed to continue conversing about post-modernism...

By this time Leadership Network had hired Doug Pagit to lead the team and organize the events. He began growing the team and it soon included Brian McLaren... Pagit, McLaren, and others such as Chris Seay, Tony Jones, Dan Kimball, and Andrew Jones stayed together and continued speaking and writing together as friends...

McLaren, a very gifted writer, rose to team leader, in part because he had an established family and church, which allowed him to devote a lot of time to the team. That team eventually morphed into what is now known as Emergent. <sup>1</sup>

These young men, almost all of them evangelicals, were obviously sincerely seeking to find ways to effectively communicate the gospel to a new generation. Their mind-set was that everything was open for discussion as they sought to achieve this goal. But there's more to the story than just a few young pastors getting together and inadvertently starting a movement.

Roger Oakland in his book *Faith Undone* traces the background of the catalyst for emergent—the Leadership Network. The Network was launched in 1984 by wealthy Texas businessman Bob Buford, with the help of Harold Myra and Paul Robbins of *Christianity Today*, as a “resource broker” to churches. The aim was to help leaders of “innovative churches” in particular to connect together. The formal mission statement declared the purpose of the Network was “to identify, connect, and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact.”<sup>2</sup>

Soon after the Network was launched, Buford asked business/management guru, the late Peter Drucker, to “lend his name, his great mind, and occasionally his presence” to this effort. Buford was, by his own admission, greatly influenced by Drucker. He wrote that “Drucker was ‘the intellectual father’ of most all that guides my approach to philanthropy. I’ve long since ceased trying to determine what thoughts are mine and which came from Peter.”<sup>3</sup> He called Drucker “the man who formed my mind.”<sup>4</sup>

Peter Drucker, though a business/management expert, had a spiritual aspect to his philosophy, as Oakland carefully documents. And that aspect was greatly influenced by a mystic named Martin Buber, a panentheist (someone who believes God is *in* everything) who taught that a “divine spark” exists within every human and within everything in creation.<sup>5</sup> Drucker, a student of Buber at the University of Frankfurt, wrote of the “Post-modern World” in his 1957 book *Landmarks of Tomorrow* and stated that “the Thou and I—a phrase obviously borrowed from the title of a Buber book—are one, [an experience] which all higher religions share.”<sup>6</sup> Drucker’s attraction to the mystical was also evident, among other things, in



his establishing of his Leader-to-Leader Institute in 1990—an inter-spiritual thought forum, which to the present day includes Buddhist and New Age sympathizers, globalists and evangelicals.<sup>7</sup>

That Drucker’s bent for the mystical impacted the founder of the Leadership Network, Bob Buford, seems quite apparent from his autobiography, *Halftime*, and from his website in which he endorses several authors and others with a mystical mindset.<sup>8</sup> This thread of the mystical, evident in the milieu from which the emergent movement arose, was strengthened in a variety of ways through work of publishers, authors and other leaders, as well as in annual conferences and various leadership events—all concerned about the need for a post-modern approach to ministry.

A case in point may be seen in the schedule of the 2008 National Pastors’ Convention, which is an outgrowth of the Network-associated Youth Specialties, and is currently sponsored by the emergent-friendly publishing houses Zondervan and InterVarsity Press. The Convention, in addition to a number of emergent speakers, featured seminars on Christian yoga and the Nooma films as well as prayer labyrinths and instruction by spiritual directors. A pre-Convention retreat at the Mission San Luis Rey retreat center was billed as “a safe place to be honest about the challenges of spiritual leadership...to experience spiritual rhythms of solitude, prayer and community, and to deepen one’s understanding of leadership that flows from one’s authentic self.” It is interesting to note that, according to the retreat leaders, “leadership flows from *self*”—not necessarily from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

To fully document the above statements is beyond the scope of this short booklet, but has been ably done in the careful research published in Oakland’s *Faith Undone*, to which the reader is referred.<sup>9</sup>

So the emergent movement was launched and has become quite pervasive, even though many evangelicals are really not aware of it. But exactly what is the emergent church? And what makes it so dangerous? Before we consider why it is so spiritually hazardous we need to note how it can be described. To do so is not easy,

since there is a wide variety within what is a very loose association of churches, leaders and organizations, all bearing the designation “emergent.”

The description of emergent is perhaps best provided by one of its early leaders, the aforementioned Mark Driscoll, who according to him, is no longer a part of the original movement. Driscoll, the pastor of the 6,000-member Mars Hill Church in Seattle, was urged by many of the parishioners in his church, and by the multitudes who hear him online, to define the movement, and in a February 2008 message he sought to do so.

### **THE EMERGENT CHURCH DESCRIBED**

In his sermon on the emergent church Driscoll broke the movement down into what he called “four lanes.”

The first “lane,” he says, are evangelicals who believe in at least the *basic* Christian doctrines, but though they’re fairly conservative, theologically, they’re “culturally liberal” in the way that they “do church.”

The second “lane” are “house church evangelicals,” still *basically* doctrinally conservative, who form little house churches or churches in other smaller settings, such as coffee shops, in a reaction against larger, more impersonal churches, including mega churches.

The third “lane” Driscoll lists are what he calls the emerging “reformers.” He says they believe *all* of the evangelical distinctives and *embrace* reformed theological traditions, but they also try to find ways to make the church relevant, accessible and culturally connected. This is where he says he and his church fit.

The fourth “lane” is a group of emergent *liberals* who Driscoll feels has “totally gotten off the highway and is lost out in the woods.” Although, as noted earlier, Driscoll was initially con-

nected to this group, he left, maintaining that they call into question much of fundamental Christian doctrine, asking questions such as “Do you need Jesus to go to heaven?” “Is anybody really going to hell?” “Is sex outside of marriage, including homosexuality, sinful?” Driscoll noted that “On many such issues they won’t answer the question.” He includes prominent emergent leaders such as Brian McLaren and Rob Bell in this group.

While Driscoll says he has only minor disagreements with the emergents in the first three “lanes,” he indicated he has grave concerns over those in the fourth.<sup>10</sup> Some of these concerns will be noted later.

So, while much could be said about all aspects of the emergent movement, the focus in this booklet’s examination is primarily, but not exclusively, on the group which Driscoll called “the fourth lane.” The designation for them throughout will be “EC,” to avoid repetition of the term “the Emergent Church.”

## **THE EMERGENT CHURCH MESSAGE**

The primary dangers within the EC “Trojan horse” are two-fold.

One is the promotion of contemplative spirituality, a belief system that utilizes ancient practices to induce altered states of consciousness—the “silence”—which is rooted in mysticism and the occult, but for a Christian audience is now wrapped in Christian terminology. Though it is touted as the way to truly know God, the basic premise of contemplative spirituality is pantheistic (i.e. God *is* all) and panentheistic (i.e. God is *in* all) as will be noted later. This belief has its primary platform and channel of entry into the church through what is called the spiritual formation movement.

A second and even more serious peril is doctrinal. This danger arises out of the EC insistence that, because we are now in the post-modern era, everything needs to be questioned and everything must change. In the EC mindset experience is considered to be of greater value than propositional (doctrinal) statements, *including*

Scripture. Consequently in the EC mindset doctrinal positions are under ongoing review. Truth can not be known with certainty. One result is that a basically Amillennial view of the church and the kingdom of God has become foundational, a view which focusses on creating the kingdom of God on earth now, through the efforts of Christians. Thus, social action, inter-spirituality and environmentalism become very important EC activities.

My intent is to briefly examine the source, beliefs and thrust of the interspiritual, experience-based, globalistic contemplative spirituality movement. Following this, we'll take a look at some of EC's unbiblical doctrinal positions. Finally, I will seek to show how the EC mind-set appears to be developing, and how it is serving as the vehicle to infiltrate the evangelical church with the above mentioned dangerous errors.

And, as I will note briefly, I believe all of this is quite possibly unwitting preparation for the prophesied end-time deception in which, were it possible, even the elect could be deceived. (Matthew 22:13)

## **EMERGENT CHURCH CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY**

Contemplative prayer, or centering prayer, is a practice that has been described as the “glue” that binds emergents together because of their perceived importance of subjective experience in Christian life. And because of the pervasiveness of EC philosophy within the current church scene, contemplative spirituality, or spiritual formation as it is sometimes called, is also becoming increasingly popular in the evangelical church at large.

In true contemplative prayer the goal is to arrive at a state of complete “stillness” or “mindlessness” in order to “hear God’s voice”. Several emergent authors have described it thus:

In general, centering prayer works like this: Choose a word (Jesus or Father) as a focus. Repeat the word silently in your mind

for a set amount of time (say, twenty minutes) until your heart seems to be repeating the word by itself, as naturally and involuntarily as breathing.... Take deep breaths, concentrating on relaxing your body...Make every effort to ‘stop the flow of talking going in within you’ ...to slow it down until it come to a halt. <sup>11</sup>

Roger Oakland, in *Faith Undone*, writes “Almost without exception, leaders in the emergent conversation embrace mysticism (i.e. contemplative spirituality) in their theological playgrounds: it is the element that binds the movement together.” In a chapter entitled “Monks, Mystics and the Ancient Wisdom” Oakland documents this statement by very extensive quotations from the writings of a number of emergent leaders. <sup>12</sup>

One typical example is this quote from Spencer Burke, in *The Ooze*, an emergent website:

I stopped reading the approved evangelical reading list...I discovered new authors and new voices at the bookstore—Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and St. Teresa of Avila. The more I read, the more intrigued I became. Contemplative spirituality seemed to open up a whole new way for me to understand and experience God.

I was struck by the incredible wisdom that could be found apart from the “approved” evangelical reading list. A Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, gave me a new appreciation for the meaning of community. His *New Man and Seeds of Contemplation* touched my heart in ways other religious books had not. Not long afterward my thinking was stretched again, this time by Thich Nhat Hanh—a Buddhist monk...Hanh’s *Living Buddha, Living Christ* gave me insight into Jesus from an Eastern perspective. <sup>13</sup>

Brian McLaren’s most recent book, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*, which is described as “shining a light on the spiritual disciplines [including contemplation] that have been in use since the time of Abraham,” is the first in a series

of eight to be published by Thomas Nelson. The General Editor for the series, titled *The Ancient Practices Series*, is Phyllis Tickle of Publishers Weekly. She has been called “the best friend emergent could have.”

In the last chapter “Theosis (via Unitiva) McLaren writes:

The purpose of the *via purgativa* [the practices] is to prepare us for the *via illuminativa* [the awakening], and the purpose of *via illuminativa* is to prepare us for the *via unitiva* [all is one], the union of our nature with the nature of God. (pp 171-172)

He calls God “fire” and says “We join God in being fire... Before the beginning... God was All and All was God.”<sup>14</sup>

This kind of language would fit right in with New Age writing such as is found in Eckhart Tolle’s *A New Earth*. Tragically, most emergents are either completely unaware of, or disregard, the fact that New Agers, occultists and those practicing Eastern religions regard the contemplative practice as part of *their* movement.

For example, the editors of *New Age Journal* (Fall, 1992, pp 52-53) wrote:

Those who practice Transcendental Meditation may be surprised to learn that Christianity has its own form of mantra meditation. The technique, called Centering Prayer, draws on the spiritual exercises of the Desert Fathers, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and the famous Jesus Prayer...Reliance on a mantric centering device has a long history in the mystical canon of Christianity.

*Contemplative Living*, a New Age book published by Omega Mind, Body, Spirit Institute, the largest holistic New Age learning center in the U.S., endorses the contemplative prayer views of such Catholic mystics as Father Thomas Keating, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and others. (Page 113).

Steve Muse, director of Eastern Regional Watch Ministry, says

More than thirty years ago, as an occultist, I was deeply involved in mysticism and the practice of contemplative prayer. I learned this technique from studying Catholic mystics who said then, and teach now, that one does not have to believe in Jesus Christ in order to enter into the contemplative experience, but that all roads lead us to the same goal.<sup>15</sup>

An intriguing little booklet entitled *Catholic Connection*, by Nebraska Mennonite pastor David Burkey, details the purpose and outcome of a June 1977 conference convened by a directive from Vatican II. It was mandated by the document “Nostra Actate,” which stated that “The [Roman Catholic] Church therefore urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians...acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians.”

The event, held in Petersham, England, brought together people from diverse religious backgrounds, including non-Christians. The goals of the conference, as stated in their report, were:

1. To reflect together about the importance for monks and nuns to meet and understand, to respect, and even to assimilate certain *values* of the Asian religions.
2. *To take the initiative* in promoting inter-religious dialogue with Asian monks and Asian religions, as requested by the Roman Secretariate for Non-Christian Religions.
3. And finally to arouse interest among Western monks and nuns in regard to the extreme importance of Asian cultures and religions for themselves and for the contemporary world.” (Emphasis in original).<sup>16</sup>

The focus on combining the spiritual “values” of various religions will be considered in more detail later, but in regard to contemplative prayer it is significant to note that the report of the conference indicated that each day of the event began with meditation “...for an hour, guided by Abbot Tholens or by another Master, making use of the Asian insights into the divine nature available also to

Christians.” Each day ended with prayer, with prayer cushions provided for Eastern yoga practitioners, a barren Zen altar, or flowers at the eight points of the compass for Hindu worshippers. <sup>17</sup>

It is not difficult to see how this approval (known officially as the Church-sanctioned Monastic Interreligious Dialogue–MID) of eclectic interspiritual contemplative praying within the mystical stream in Catholicism may well have impacted some of the recent or current Catholic mystics who are so favourably quoted by many in the emergent conversation. But the “silent” state sought in centering prayer is not good.

In fact, without question, to seek to achieve mindlessness in order to “know God” is unbiblical and very dangerous. One dramatic example of the potential pitfalls can be found in the published statements of Sue Monk Kidd, an author and conference speaker who is popular in many Christian circles, especially those in the EC.

In Monk Kidd’s first book, *God’s Joyful Surprise*, she describes how, as a mature Baptist Sunday School teacher, she became dissatisfied with her Christian experience. After reading a book on centering prayer and mysticism by the late Catholic mystic Thomas Merton, she blissfully started down the road to contemplative spirituality. She began to read numerous books on the subject and practised the methods described, including the repeating of the sacred mantras taught in them. She tells how she soon came to the panentheistic conclusion that the *human* soul (not just the Christian soul) is “the seat and repository of the inner Divine, the God-image;” that “we are one with all people and when encountering another person [whether Christian or not] we should walk as if on holy ground since God dwells there.” <sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately this sort of spirituality eventually led Monk Kidd to state in her subsequent books unbiblical concepts such as the following:

We also need Goddess consciousness to reveal earth’s holiness...Matter becomes inspired; it breathes divinity. Earth be-



comes alive and sacred...Goddess [Sophia] offers us the holiness of everything. <sup>19</sup>

After describing the violent angry reaction, including physical revulsion, which Monk Kidd experienced when she heard a pastor quote Scripture, she wrote:

[The violent response] was the purest inner knowing I had experienced, and it was shouting in me *no, no, no*. The ultimate authority of my life is not the Bible; it is not confined between the covers of a book. It is not something written by men and frozen in time. It is not from a source outside myself. My ultimate authority is the divine voice in my own soul. Period. (Emphasis hers)<sup>20</sup>

As I grounded myself in feminine spiritual experience I was initiated into my body in a deeper way. I came to know myself as an embodiment of Goddess.

...Mystical awakening in all the great religious traditions, including Christianity, involves arriving at an experience of unity or nondualism. In Zen it's know as samadhi...Transcendence and immanence are not separate. The Divine is one...The day of my awakening was the day I saw and knew I saw all things in God, and God in all things. <sup>21</sup>

I've included these rather extensive Monk Kidd quotes because they are fairly typical of the sort of spirituality that is found in practitioners of the kind of prayer which has as its goal the achieving of the state of total mindlessness into which "god" can speak. This is not biblical or wise. It is, in fact, extremely dangerous as Sue Monk Kidd's experience indicates.

Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute writes:

Hindu gurus like Baghwan Shree Rajneesh believed the 'goal was to create a new man, one who is happily *mindless*.' Thus, he engaged his devotees in practices designed to subjugate

their critical-thinking faculties and *empty* their minds of coherent thought. In sharp distinction, the Judeo-Christian tradition has a high view of the mind. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were instructed to practice good judgment through inquiring, probing and thoroughly investigating a teaching or practice. (see Deuteronomy 13). Likewise in the New Testament, the apostle Paul commands the Thessalonians to “test everything:” (I Thessalonians 5:21) and commends the Bereans for using their minds to analyze his teaching in light of Scripture (Acts 17:11). The Lord himself commanded the disciples to judge rightly (John 7:24) and to love God with all of their hearts, souls and *minds*. (Matthew 22:37).<sup>22</sup> (Emphasis added)

Proponents of the practise of centering prayer frequently quote Psalm 46:10 (“Be still and know that I am God”) in support of their procedure. However, an examination of the psalm soon reveals that the “silence” of the mystics in *not* what is indicated here, as *The Christian Research Journal* clearly documents in the excellent article “Be Still and Observe the Text.” (Volume 28, November 4, 2005). The verse is telling God’s children to cease striving and to trust God in a time of crisis or need. As Dr. Joseph Stowell puts it in *Radical Reliance*, his excellent volume on intimacy with God: “[In this verse] God is saying we need to stop striving, let go, put our hands down, take a deep breath, and relax [in Him].”<sup>23</sup> Psalm 46:10 is *not* about achieving a state of mindless silence.

Wise indeed are the words of the late Dr. Keith Price, in his book *Thirsting After God*. He writes:

Also, a word to the wise about meditating, which is, after all, the best foundation for contemplating [God].<sup>24</sup> As I behold God’s glory, it is essential that I use the Bible as my primary meditation for God to disclose Himself... Meditation on the Word primarily occupies the *mind*. It sets up a defence mechanism to prevent the evil one from passing off his lies as truth...It also make me less vulnerable to being drawn into strange worship ideas or a false mysticism.<sup>25</sup>

The contemplative emergents do not agree with Price. Rather, as

Sue Monk Kidd did, they claim that the Bible is *not* the authority—*God* is! And He moves “mysteriously up on a higher level [than the Bible].” This very cleverly makes the mysticism approach valid—in order to accommodate the modern mind-set. For a full discussion of this dangerous theory see Chapter Six, “Hot Words About Bible Interpretation,” in Brian McLaren’s *A New Kind of Christian*, in which he skilfully seeks to thoroughly undermine biblical authority. A Benedictine approach to Scripture is later suggested as an alternative. <sup>26</sup>

A variation of this concept is presented in *A New Kind of Conversation - Blogging Toward A Postmodern Faith*. In a chapter entitled “The Bible, Theology and Postmodernism” the statement is made that “The goal of reading Scripture for its meaning—as opposed to several other appropriate and necessary ways to read Scripture—is not so much to find *the* meaning in the text as it is to, through a process of careful triangulation (along the axes of text, community and tradition), hear the voice of God speak into our present life context through the pages of Scripture.” (Emphasis in original). <sup>27</sup>

Prominent EC author Dan Kimball says “The basis of learning has shifted from logic and rational, systematic thought to the realm of experience. People increasingly long for the mystical and the spiritual rather than the evidential and fact-based faith of the modern soil.” <sup>28</sup> What this means in actual practise is a downgrading of the Word in favour of mystical experience.

Pastor Bob DeWaay, in a compelling *Critical Issues Commentary* entitled “Why Evangelicals are Returning to Rome: The Abandonment of *Sola Scriptura* as a Formal Principle,” documents how emergent adherents reject systematic theology, in favour of the experience of hearing God’s voice, and thus make impossible the *principle* of scripture alone as the formal principle of theology. DeWaay writes

[For the emergent], to think that one can know what the Bible means in a non-relativistic way is considered a throwback to

now dead ‘modernity.’ The Emergent mantra concerning the Bible is ‘We cannot know, we cannot know, we cannot know.’ Furthermore, in their thinking, it is a sign of arrogance to claim to know. For the postmodern, theology based on *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) is as dead and buried as a fossilized relic of bygone days.<sup>29</sup>

This kind of subjective approach can and does lead to unorthodox theology. What are some of these EC doctrinal errors and how are they communicated to the church?

## EMERGENT CHURCH THEOLOGY

***Disclaimer.** Before taking a very brief look at a sampling of bad EC theology it needs to be plainly said that I bear no malice toward any of those who will be mentioned, or to their fellow travellers. They are probably very fine people. A friend who has had personal interaction with Brian McLaren tells me in an email that McLaren is a very “gracious, humble person.”*

*Nor do I pretend to know the motivation of the emergents, since only God can see our hearts. Thus I accept their claim that they sincerely want to see the church become what God desires it to be. Unfortunately, though they do make some valid observations about shortcomings within the church and offer some good recommendations, I am convinced that their proposed solutions are largely unscriptural—in some cases very anti-biblical—and thus are wrong and harmful.*

*Moreover, while motivation cannot be known, published and/or recorded statements can be. When such are unbiblical and dangerous, believers have a scriptural obligation to speak up for the truth, as apologist Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute has clearly articulated. One of the uses of Scripture is to rebuke and correct (2 Timothy 3:16) and the task of correction of error and rebuke of those promoting it is plainly commanded. (2 Timothy 4:2, Jude 3). The following then, in particular, is predicated upon these disclaimer observations.*

Based on *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* and the published writings of a number of the leading and acknowledged spokesmen for EC (Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet, Doug Pagit, Don Kimball,

Rob Bell, et al) it is fair to say that the EC—though very flexible and fluid in its doctrine—is basically Amillennial in its eschatology. This leads to an errant view of the kingdom of God, which in turn leads to an unbiblical view of the gospel and of the role of the church, among other problems. Thus a major thrust of EC proponents is to make this world God’s kingdom through social action, environmentalism and co-operation with whoever shares such goals.

For example, Rob Bell, in *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*, writes that

For Jesus, the question wasn’t how do I get into heaven? but how do I bring heaven here?...The goal isn’t escaping this world, but making this world the kind of place God can come to. And God is remaking us into the kind of people who can do this kind of work... Salvation is the entire universe being brought back into harmony with its maker. This has huge implications for how people present the message of Jesus. Yes, Jesus can come into our hearts. But we can join a movement that is as wide and as big as the universe itself. <sup>30</sup>

This sort of a mind-set may help to explain why Bell, along with Doug Pagit, joined with the Dalai Lama for a “Seeds of Compassion” social action conference in Seattle in April 2008. Certainly compassion is commendable, but joining with an eastern mystic Buddhist semi-god is not.

Doug Pagit, acknowledged EC leader and pastor of the emergent Solomon’s Porch church in Minneapolis, in a Way of the Master radio broadcast on October 22, 2007, made it “as clear as he was able that there is no real hell and that God will deal with good Buddhists and Muslims the same way He will deal with Christians.” <sup>31</sup>

Brian McLaren frequently scornfully mocks the concept of the Rapture and the hope of Christ’s return, <sup>32</sup> and writes that we don’t know what the gospel is. <sup>33</sup> In *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything* McLaren states

that he believes that the church has never understood the message of Jesus. Very early, he says, the church “twisted” what Jesus taught into a gospel of “justification by grace through faith, the free gift of salvation, Christ being a substitutionary sacrifice for..sin.” (p. 91). He writes

Jesus seems to say, ‘The kingdom of God doesn’t need to wait until something else happens.’ No, it is available and among you now... invite people of all nations, races, classes, and *religions* to participate in this network of dynamic, interactive relationships with God *and all God’s creation!* (p. 74, emphasis mine)

...Many Hindus are willing to consider Jesus as a legitimate manifestation of the divine...many Buddhists see Jesus as one of humanity’s most enlightened people...A shared *reappraisal* of Jesus’ message could provide a unique or *common ground* for *urgently needed dialogue*—and it doesn’t seem an exaggeration to say that the future of our planet may depend on such dialogue. This reappraisal of Jesus’ message may be the only project capable of *saving a number of religions*. (p. 7, emphasis added).<sup>34</sup>

While this universalistic, inter-spiritualistic reworking of the words of Jesus is appalling enough, McLaren’s most serious and foundational error, however, is his undermining of the concept of biblical truth. As John MacArthur writes in “Brian McLaren and the Clarity of Scripture:”

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture (that the central message of the Bible is clear and understandable, and that the Bible itself can be properly interpreted in a normal literal sense) has been a cornerstone of evangelical theology ever since the Reformation.<sup>35</sup>

MacArthur goes on to show in a five-part critique of McLaren’s published words that McLaren, “...By overturning the historic understanding of Scripture with a new, ‘secret message of Jesus,’ McLaren has undermined the clarity of Scripture. Only a Bible that

is impossibly ambiguous can fit in McLaren’s neo-gnostic model.”<sup>36</sup> For a full discussion of this important issue go to [www.grace-toyou.org](http://www.grace-toyou.org), click on Archives, and then the five “Brian McLaren and the Clarity of Scripture” articles.

Yet another EC leader, Samir Selmanovic, has stated

The emerging church movement has come to believe that the ultimate context of the spiritual aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ is not Christianity but rather the kingdom of God... Is [Christianity] the only [religion] that understands the true meaning of life? Or does God place his truth in others too? The gospel is not our gospel, but the gospel of the kingdom of God, and what belongs to the kingdom of God cannot be hijacked by Christianity.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly on Selmanovic’s website, Faith House Project, he indicates that his vision “...seeks to bring progressive Jews, Christians, Muslims, and spiritual seekers of no faith to become an inter-faith community for the good of the world. We have one world and one God.”<sup>38</sup>

Unbiblical positions such as these, and many more which could be cited, are the logical result of the fluid emergent theology, which downgrades the authority of Scripture and sees the kingdom of God as present now, with future culmination as Christians (the subjects of the kingdom) join hands with whomever—from whatever religion or non-religion—to reclaim the culture, restore justice, eliminate poverty, provide education, clean up the ecosystem, tame global warming, and so on.

As Pastor Gary Gilley notes, the issue is not whether Christians should be doing some of these things, (we should and to some extent have been and are), but rather whether this is the commission Christ left His church, and whether doing so will more quickly bring in the kingdom.<sup>39</sup> The answer, for anyone who accepts the Bible literally, is “obviously not!”

This EC Amillennial “kingdom now” position is virtually identical

to that of the liberal theologians of the past century. In fact, Mark Driscoll has written “The emergent church is the latest version of liberalism. The only difference is that the old liberalism accommodated modernity and the new liberalism accommodates postmodernism.”<sup>40</sup>

Driscoll has also commented that the ‘conversation’ has “erupted into a conflict over eight very important theological issues” which he lists as being the following:

1. Scripture. This includes the divine inspiration, perfection and authority of Scripture.
2. Jesus Christ. This includes His deity and sovereignty over human history as Lord.
3. Gender. This includes whether or not people are created with inherent gender differences, whether or not those gender roles have any implications for the governments of home and church, and whether or not homosexual practice is sinful. This also includes whether or not it is appropriate to use gender specific names for God, such as Father, like Jesus did.
4. Sin. The primary issue here is whether or not human beings are conceived as sinners or are essentially morally neutral and are internally corrupted by external forces.
5. Salvation. The issue is whether Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation and whether or not salvation exists for people in other religions who do not worship Jesus Christ.
6. The Cross. The issue here is the doctrine of the penal substitution and whether or not Jesus died in our place for our sins or if He went to the cross solely as an example for us to follow when we suffer.
7. Hell. The issue is whether or not anyone will experience conscious eternal torment, or if unbelievers will simply cease to exist (annihilationism) or eventually be saved and taken to heaven (universalism).
8. Authority. This issue is perhaps the most difficult of all. Much of this conversation is happening online with blogs and chat rooms. However, as the conversation becomes a conflict, the inherent flaw of postmodernism is becoming a practical obstacle to unity because there is no source of authority to determine



what constitutes orthodox or heretical doctrine. With the authority of Scripture open for debate and even long-established Church councils open for discussion (e.g. the Council of Carthage that denounced Pelagius as a heretic for denying human sinfulness), the conversation continues while the original purpose of getting on mission may be overlooked because there is little agreement on the message or the mission of the church. <sup>41</sup>

Driscoll concludes the article containing the above with these solemn words: “The only hope is a return to the true gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. The gospel must be unleashed in the world through the Church for the transforming salvation of sinners and their cultures. If the gospel is lost, *as I fear it already has been among the Revisionists*, then tomorrow will be a dark day for the truth about Jesus.” (Emphasis mine) <sup>42</sup>

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Note: As indicated earlier, Mark Driscoll is a conundrum. He certainly appears to be theologically sound, as his comments about the nature of the overall emergent movement, his own church theology and his analysis of the EC, quoted above, would certainly indicate. He is also reportedly being “mentored” by men like John Piper and D.A. Carson, who are biblical stalwarts.

And yet he has a reputation for being foul-mouthed. Emergent author Donald Miller in *Blue Like Jazz* says Driscoll is known as “Mark, the Cussing Pastor.” Recently Driscoll ignited a good deal of controversy with the release of a promotional video for a conference on the Old Testament book Song of Solomon. Many Christians felt that it was both blasphemous and pornographic, as well as being a very questionable interpretation of Scripture. <sup>43</sup> This is somewhat typical of how Driscoll frequently “pushes the envelope” with shocking statements or actions, perhaps in an effort to capture the attention of post-moderns.

In addition, his Mars Hill Graduate School and Driscoll’s own website promotes contemplative spirituality. <sup>44</sup> Driscoll thus appears to be an unfortunate mixture of the good and bad, which (given his undisputedly widespread influence) is truly disconcerting.

Sadly, this good/bad mixture seems to be typical of many who are either

some part of the movement or sympathetic to it. Why respected professed evangelicals leaders, a number of whom could be named, create potential confusion by endorsing (or accepting endorsements from) unbiblical and/or New Age authors, or make confusing doctrinal statements, is puzzling and disturbing.

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Following are several examples of theological error Driscoll has so well described from among the multitude which could be given.

EC author Don Kimball, (who in writing his book, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, interviewed numerous non-Christian youth, including a lesbian), makes it clear that the EC church must not be confrontational. He describes how the unchurched do not like to be reminded of or confronted with the fact of sin and the need of a Saviour, and concludes that confrontation is 'mean-spirited' & should be eliminated.<sup>45</sup> One wonders which "Jesus" Kimball's unchurched youth like, since our Lord was unquestionably extremely confrontational when it came to sin and salvation.

And it is not surprising that Brian McLaren would write that he believes people can become 'Christ-followers' without necessarily leaving their Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish or Muslim religion, or that he would quote favourably Henri Nouwen, who wrote that people can come to God without knowing Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

Also McLaren has endorsed *Reimagining Christianity* by Episcopal priest Alan Jones, in which Jones called the biblical truth of the atonement "a vile doctrine," adding that "The Church's fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be reimagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it."<sup>47</sup> Yet, in spite of such heresy, McLaren writes that Jones is "a pioneer in reimagining a Christian faith that emerges from authentic spirituality."<sup>48</sup> But then, McLaren has himself written that, in demanding the sacrifice of Christ to provide for our atonement, God is "unwilling to do what He requires of us—that is, to forgive unconditionally."<sup>49</sup> And McLaren describes the concept of God sending His Son to the cross as "false advertising for God."<sup>50</sup>

Given such unbiblical theology, how has the rapid growth of the emergent philosophy occurred, especially its inroads into the evangelical church? Certainly one major factor is that evangelical Christians are extremely biblically illiterate these days. Because many do not really know the truths of Scripture, what sounds new and appealing often gains a foothold even though it may be heresy.

But in addition to that fact, it appears that a process (backed by the marketing strength and influence of the Leadership Network and associated interests) is unfolding, with the result that the “Trojan horse” is gaining entry in an amazingly rapid way. What is that process?

## THE PROCESS

An article in the January 21, 2008, *The Lighthouse Trails Newsletter* outlines what is believed to be the process whereby the emergent has been able to move into the evangelical church. Though it is highly unlikely that any group of individuals ever sat down and deliberately strategized such a plan, nevertheless [“...It is apparent that there is a three-stage process which has resulted in making the vision of the EC become a reality: 1. The re-education of Christians... 2. The incorporation of mysticism into Christianity... and 3. A focus on bringing about the kingdom of God on earth”] <sup>51</sup>

Let’s look at these stages in a bit more detail.

**Stage One:** Re-education. Christians are to be convinced that in order to reach postmoderns the Christianity of the ages has to be replaced with a whole new way of thinking. Examples of this re-education effort abound. The foremost EC spokesman, Brian McLaren, embarked on a January 2008 speaking tour of U.S. churches, schools and conferences in which his message was entitled “Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crisis and a Revolution of Hope” from the title of one of his recent books.

Also in January 2008 Robert Schuller and Erwin McManus hosted a “Rethink Conference” at the Crystal Cathedral. Its stated purpose

was to “rethink Christianity” and the speakers’ roster was not limited to Christians. Such is in keeping with a frequent emphasis in a good deal of EC literature that Christians must dialogue with non-Christian religions such as Islam and Buddhism in order to benefit from the “values” to be found in these faiths.

The constant drumbeat of the numerous emergent authors is “change, rethink, re-analyse” the church and Christianity. And if any doubt remains about the desire to change more than just the externals, the unofficial website of the movement—The Leadership Network—removes that doubt. The site states that their outlook on “truth” offers “a more flexible approach to theology whereby individual differences in belief and morality are accepted within reason.” The site further declares the desire to “re-analyse the Bible against the context into which it was written.”<sup>52</sup>

According to the late Jerry Falwell, such views “open perilous avenues that enable suggestions that Jesus is not the Christ, that the Bible is not inspired by God Himself and there are ways to heaven other than through Jesus.” as stated on the April 13, 2007, Falwell Confidential at <webmaster-reply@falwell.com>

Numerous other examples of the drive for change from emergent writers and speakers could be cited were space not a factor. Shockingly, many Christian training institutions have, to a greater or lesser degree, become a part of such re-education.

**Stage Two:** Get new-thinking Christians to incorporate contemplative spirituality and mysticism into their lives in order to become more intimate with God, and to hear the voice of a new kind of “God”—the mysterious authority above the Bible. Not the God who is described in the Bible, however, but one that is found through the “ancient-future faith” and altered states of consciousness, achieved by the use of labyrinths, icons, rituals, worship that involves all the senses, and the use of mantras that produce the “silence” in which the mind is totally emptied of all thought in order that ‘God’ can speak. One emergent leader puts it this way: “I build life not on the Word of God, but the voice of God.”<sup>53</sup> And in

achieving the required “silence,” as well as other purported benefits of contemplative spirituality, the insights and instructions of the Catholic mystics are highly valued *and* utilized. A case in point is the cover article, entitled “The Future Lies in the Past,” in the February 2008 issue of *Christianity Today* magazine.

The article, which may best be described as a promotion for contemplative spirituality, includes statements such as the comment that “young emerging evangelicals feel that the traditional church is too centered on words and propositions [i.e. doctrine],” and that they are “looking for a renewed encounter with a God [that goes beyond] doctrinal definitions.” Furthermore “In short, the search for historic roots can and should lead not to conversion [to Roman Catholicism], but to a deepening ecumenical conversation, and a recognition by evangelicals that the Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox are fellow Christians with much to teach us.” The article also states that the new evangelicalism must learn the “ascetic disciplines from Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, and living, practicing monks and nuns.”<sup>54</sup>

Pastor Bob DeWaay in a *Contemporary Critical Issues* essay notes that Dallas Willard is mentioned in the *CT* article as a reliable guide for the process of evangelicals learning the disciplines, and observes that Willard has long directed Christians to monastic practices which he himself admits are not taught in the Bible. In fact, DeWaay states that Willard pioneered the rejection of *sola scriptura* in practice on the grounds that the churches following it are failures.

He quotes Willard as writing, “All pleasing and doctrinally sound schemes of Christian education, church growth, and spiritual renewal came around at last to this disappointing result [of failure]. But whose fault was this failure?”<sup>55</sup> The “failure,” according to Willard is that, “...the gospel preached and the instruction and example given these faithful ones simply did not do justice to the *nature of human personality, as embodied, incarnate.*”<sup>56</sup>

DeWaay asks, So what does this mean? It means that we have

failed because our gospel had too little to do with our bodies! And the remedy for such “failure,” says Willard, is to find practices in church history which *do* involve the body and which are proven to work. But are these practices taught in the Bible? Willard admits that they are not, by using an argument from silence, based on the phrase “exercise unto godliness” in I Timothy 4:7.

Here is Willard’s interpretation of that verse, as quoted by DeWaay:

Or does it [the possibility the phrase ‘exercise unto godliness’ was imprecise] indicate a precise course of action he [Paul] understood in definite terms, carefully followed himself, and called others to share? Of course it was the latter. So obviously so, for him and the readers of his own day, that he would feel no need to write a book on the disciplines of the spiritual life that explained systematically what he had in mind. <sup>57</sup>

But, DeWaay comments, what does this do to *sola scriptura*? It negates it. In Willard’s theology, the Holy Spirit, Who inspired the Biblical writers, forgot to inspire them to write about the spiritual disciplines that the contemplatives maintain are essential for all Christians. If this is the case, then in order to obtain godliness we need spiritual practices that were never prescribed in the Bible! The role of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and rational prayer in spiritual growth, which *are* plainly taught in Scripture, are obviously considered by the mystics to be inadequate.

Unfortunately an avalanche of books, articles, CDs, DVDs, seminars and conferences in which the same basic message is presented has almost engulfed the Christian world in recent years.

**Stage Three:** Allow the rethinking of doctrine, the new view of Scripture and the voice of the mystical god encountered in the “silence” to direct people to the final stage of the process, and that is to focus on *their* bringing about a supposed kingdom of God on earth—*now*—in which all will be peace, and in which man finally defeats the problems that plague the earth.

Various global peace projects are already being proposed, in which (like a three-legged stool) government, business and “people of faith” (regardless of what faith or religion it may be) all work together. Such effort is more important, say its proponents, than preaching a divisive, narrow gospel, which only polarizes people, with the goal of seeing them become born again. It also involves dialoguing with not only various branches of Christianity but also with non-Christian religions like Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and so on, in order to benefit from their wisdom and enlist their help. It’s all part of creating God’s kingdom on earth, here and now.

The idea of dialogue, in terms of both Scripture and faith, is pervasive. For example, consider the following:

One of the primary bloggers in *A New Kind of Conversation: Blogging Toward a Postmodern Faith* writes the following in a section entitled “Evangelical Faith and (Postmodern) Others:”

The postmodern condition defines itself in terms of ‘hybridity’ (a *composite* of different types of things or ideas from different sources)... Its ethos wages ‘war on totality’ and the hegemony (exclusive control) of any *single* perspective, while encouraging and celebrating the regional, the local, the particular...

Theology in a postmodern context displays... a great deal of creativity whose theoretical framework is the postmodern concepts of pastiche (a *composite* work made up from different mediums and genres), bricolage (‘making it up from scratch’ without following pre-established rules), micmicry (*copying* ideas, concepts, language, etc. from someone else) and hybridity...” (Emphasis added).<sup>58</sup>

In plain non-academic language that means don’t function on the basis of the old “modern” idea of right/wrong, black/white, pure/impure, but rather seek a synthesis, that is, a mix or composite of differing positions. And do so, apparently even if it involves re-thinking Scripture.

This may explain why a professor is described approvingly in a Christian university publication for, in part, being involved in dialogue with Muslims and for serving on the faculty of a Catholic institution, as well as for promoting the “ancient-future faith” concept which includes full-blown contemplative spirituality.<sup>59</sup>

It also adds significance to a statement in Tony Compolo’s book *Speaking My Mind*, in which he writes on pages 149-150: “...a *theology of mysticism* provides some hope for *common ground* between Christianity and Islam.” (Emphasis added).

An astonishing indication of how this concept of “finding common ground” has taken hold can be seen in a recent exchange of open letters between a group of Muslim leaders and over 300 Christian leaders, including a number of prominent evangelicals such as Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson, and others.

A *Christian Post* article, entitled “Christian Leaders Invite Muslims to Love God, Neighbours Together,” details how an unprecedented open letter from 138 representative Muslim clerics, scholars, intellectuals and other leaders elicited a disturbing Christian response.<sup>60</sup>

The Muslim letter was entitled “A Common World Between Us and You,” and urged that followers of the two faiths find “common ground.” The Christian response asked Muslims to “forgive Christians for their past sins such as the Crusades and excesses of the war on terror,” and urged the establishing of an “interfaith dialogue” that would “reshape the two communities to genuinely reflect our common love for God and for one another.”

Amazingly, and certainly unbiblically, the Christian letter also stated that “The future of the world depends on our ability as Christians and Muslims to live together in peace,” and added that “If we fail to make every effort to make peace and come together in harmony you correctly remind us that ‘our eternal souls are at stake’ as well.”<sup>61</sup> A failure to live in harmony with Muslims has



nothing to do with the future of the world which is under the control of a sovereign God, or with the eternal destiny of souls—since only failure to be born into the family of God does that.

Several conservative theologians, notably Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, have pointed out that present-day Christians have no right, or need, to seek forgiveness for the Crusades, which were primarily territorial wars as the so-called “Christian” armies of Europe beat back the Islamic invasion, (see Dinesh D’Sousa’s *What’s So Great About Christianity* for a powerful, scholarly essay on this issue) or for the war on terror, which is a U.S. and other governments matter in which Christianity, as such, has had no voice. They have also shown that the God of the Bible and Allah of the Koran are not the same God to be “loved together.”<sup>62</sup> Some of the original signatories to the letter have since withdrawn.

Now unquestionably, peaceful relations with the people of other religions is a worthy goal, but not at the expense of an abandonment of Scriptural truth. And certainly efforts to combat poverty, ill health, starvation, and so on are most commendable, as is the desire to facilitate peace. Without question, concern for peace (though not at any price) and for the physical and material needs of people is profoundly Christian.

Evangelicals have often been negligent in this regard in the past, focussing rather on spiritual needs. Lately, though, many organizations such as Samaritan’s Purse, World Relief, World Vision, Food for the Hungry, Mennonite Central Committee, The Salvation Army and many denominational groups have brought a good deal of balance in this regard. In fact, in recent years Christians have unquestionably been in the forefront of global humanitarian efforts.

Without doubt, both the gospel and social action are necessary, which is a valid emphasis from the emergent conversation. However, when peace plans focus on social issues to the virtual or total exclusion of the gospel, (because it is offensive to those of other faiths) something is profoundly wrong.

It is also very disturbing to compare some of the new evangelicalism's plans—to bring in the kingdom by striving for world peace—with what some New Age proponents are proposing in order to achieve the same global peace goal.

One such fairly detailed New Age plan, eerily similar to what some evangelicals are proposing, has been widely presented by Neale Donald Walsch. <sup>63</sup> Walsch is a New Ager who claims that he has channeled, through automatic writing, the words of a spirit which has identified itself as “God.” These channeled books— *The New Revelations: Conversations with God* —and a myriad of related materials, have sold over seven million copies since they were first published in the early 1990s. They are frequently blasphemous and contain grotesque “revelations” which are diametrically opposed to Scripture.

For example, Walsch's “god” has revealed that

The era of a Single Saviour is over. What is needed now is joint action, combined effort, collective co-creation... The world must create a New Spirituality... Evil is that which you call evil. Yet even that I love. I do not love ‘good’ more than I love ‘bad.’ Hitler went to heaven. When you understand this, you will understand God... There is only one message that can change the course of human history forever. That message is the New Gospel: WE ARE ALL ONE... There is only One of Us. You and I are One. Walsch's “god” also said that Hitler did the Jews a favour by killing six million of them in the Holocaust. <sup>64</sup>

Yet the peace plan of Walsch's god looks very similar to what some emergents and/or fellow-travellers are proposing. <sup>65</sup> That's thought-provoking and disturbing.

## **CONSEQUENCES AND DANGERS**

While many of the consequences and hazards of embracing the emergent mind-set have already been alluded to, a brief summary

of these is in order.

The most serious is the rejection, or at best, the questioning of the authority of Scripture and the historic faith. Consequently proponents maintain that “All theology will remain a conversation about the Truth...No systematic theology can be final.”<sup>66</sup> Dialogue, not propositional Scripture, is the way to decide what to believe. As one EC writer put it concerning a theological matter “This is what I believe, but I could be wrong. What do you think? Let’s talk.”<sup>67</sup> It’s also why the goal of EC evangelism is “conversations, not conversions.”

Tragically, for Generation Xers objective truth is relative, and those Christians who make statements about absolutes or “truth” in Scripture are often held up for ridicule, being branded as bigoted or racist—or worse. This may explain why the faculty member of a respected Christian university could state his view that Christians are “too committed to the Bible,”<sup>68</sup> or that a EC spokesperson would refer to “making an idol of truth.”<sup>69</sup>

Emergent writers and speakers frequently speak scornfully of the tendency of traditionalists to hold a high view of Scripture, accusing them of “bibliolatry”—the worship of Scripture—which, in the opinion of emergents, is a grave offense. Indeed, if the Bible instead of God is worshipped, that is a serious error, but to claim that Scripture-loving believers worship the Bible is setting up a phony straw man in the vast majority of instances.

An even greater danger may lie in the possibility that we could be seeing the thin edge of the wedge leading to what is predicted in I Timothy 4:1 “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” Consider the following.

It is significant to note that Alice Bailey, originator of the term “New Age,” (who wrote nineteen books by means of demonic telepathic communication from an unseen spirit master called “the Tibetan”) prophesied in 1948 what she described as “the regeneration of the churches.” She said that “The Christian church in its many branches can serve as...a nucleus through which world illumination

[to prepare the way for ‘the Avator, the Coming One’] may be accomplished.”<sup>70</sup> To do so the church need not give up its beliefs, but merely alter them slightly—transcend or add to them!

Thus Bailey’s view of the desired religious rejuvenation has everyone remaining diverse (i.e. staying in their own religion) but uniting in perspective, with no one religion claiming a unique corner on the truth. As such, all religions are seen to emanate from the same source and to lead to the same destination. Then, according to Bailey’s spirit guide, when this state has been achieved, the “Coming One” will appear on the scene at the opportune time to lead a united humanity into an era of global peace.<sup>71</sup>

These concepts, and many other related pronouncements revealed by spirit guides, surely constitute doctrines of demons. And yet, some of these ideas, or very similar ones, are finding their way into the thinking of Christians—all in the purported effort to relate to the post-modern mind.

## **SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

At this point the question may be asked by concerned believers: “What should I/we do? I’m only one person with little or no influence on a national or international scale.” While this is certainly true for most of us, many readers may be parents or grandparents; most will be members of a church. The spiritual protection of beloved children and/or grandchildren, and the future of one’s church are areas in which there can be, and needs to be, meaningful influence. We must not ignore the Scriptural commands that believers are to stand for the truth.

So what do we do?

Obviously the most important action is to reaffirm one’s personal commitment to the Word of God as Divine objective truth, to engage in loving practical evangelism and to yield daily to the control of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. And it is essential to give oneself to earnest prayer that the Lord will revive His Church.

Our churches desperately need to experience a genuine, Spirit-breathed, heaven-sent revival—one in which the Word of God is given its rightful place in the lives of individual, obedient Christians and in church bodies. We need to sincerely pray with the Puritan saint who cried out to God:

“Lord, let it begin with me;  
cleanse my hands,  
purify my heart,  
for I am a man of unclean lips,  
sinful motives, and ungodly deeds.  
Plow up the fallow ground,  
and make me fertile soil for Your glory,  
for the heralding of Your gospel,  
and for the good of Your people once again.”

It is also important to become informed about what is happening. There are several excellent sources of such information (though not without their critics) which could be accessed through your search engine. Consider checking out the following:

<http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue105.html>  
[thebereancall.org](http://thebereancall.org)  
[understandthetimes.org](http://understandthetimes.org)  
[stevenjcamp.blogspot.com](http://stevenjcamp.blogspot.com)  
[olivetreeviews.org](http://olivetreeviews.org)  
[www.erwm.com](http://www.erwm.com)  
[letusreason.org](http://letusreason.org)  
[www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org)  
[www.svchapel.org](http://www.svchapel.org)  
[www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com](http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com)

Most of these have worthwhile archives and provide links to enable research.

The parent ministry of the last mentioned—Lighthouse Trails Publishing—has released several very well-researched and carefully

documented books by Roger Oakland and Ray Yungen. Information on how to order these valuable books is available through their website. Other ministries also offer excellent resources. Dr. John MacArthur's *The Truth War* is highly recommended.

*(Disclaimer: Canadian Revival Fellowship does not endorse absolutely everything any of the above produce, conclude or declare, but feels that these are valuable sources of information which should be prayerfully considered by believers **and** carefully compared with Scripture as they seek to understand the times in the light of God's word and will.)*

Once one has become factually informed it may be necessary to speak with the leaders of one's local church if it appears that the "Trojan horse" is being allowed entry. Any such approach *must* be undertaken in a spirit of humility, love and gentleness—but with a firm commitment to the truth of God's Word.

### **INDICATORS THAT THE 'HORSE' MAY BE GAINING ENTRY**

And here are several indicators that the EC philosophy may possibly be making inroads into your church:

1. Any suggestions by leadership that the Bible is not the final authority for all questions of spiritual life and faith, but that it must be re-analyzed in the light of culture and/or that it needs to be re-interpreted for today.
2. A growing emphasis on *really* knowing God through the kind of "spiritual formation" which includes "the silence" or contemplative prayer. As noted earlier such a practice disregards the biblical route of knowing God through His Word and His Spirit and completely undermines the concept of *sola scriptura*. Often this kind of unbiblical praying is coupled with an emphasis on a worship style which involves all of the five senses (through engaging in "ancient/future"— primarily Catholic— practices) in order to supposedly gain true, or greater, intimacy with God. Such practices may include the use of icons, labyrinths, spiritual disciplines, "Christian" yoga and such.

It must be said that making time for meditation, and for time to be alone with God in prayer and the reading/studying/memorizing of His Word, is a valid, necessary and important spiritual exercise, but such solitude is vastly different from “the silence.” (See *Christian Research Journal* article “Be Still and Observe the Text.” Go to [www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org) and click on Archives to access this article. While you are there check out a three-part series, just begun in May 2008, on the serious spiritual risks of yoga, and its total incompatibility with Christianity).

We must also acknowledge that the emphasis on knowing God experientially, and not just knowing about Him, (a need which emergent has highlighted) is an important and valid observation. However, such pursuit of God must be undertaken biblically.

3. Favourable focus on the teachings of the ancient mystics and less on the importance of God’s Word in the life of the believer and on solid biblical exegesis. These mystics, such as the Desert Fathers, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, etc., were all Roman Catholics, several of whom declared unbiblical concepts such as that everyone has divinity within and that we can come to God apart from Jesus Christ.<sup>72</sup>

An indication of where such emphasis may lead is found in the fact that Karen Sloan, a contributor to *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, says that in order to develop intimacy with God she regularly spends time with those in Catholic orders [i.e. nuns, monks], something she has written about in her book *Flirting with Monasticism: Finding God on Ancient Paths*.<sup>73</sup>

4. Any degree of dialogue with non-Christian religions, in order to *exchange* values and insights, coupled with a questioning as to whether there may not be ways to know God apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Any suggestion that one can be a “Christ-follower” (but not necessarily a Christian) without leaving one’s non-Christian religion is also a warning sign.

5. Excessive “Kingdom talk,” (especially if couched in terms of *Christians* bringing in an earthly Kingdom through *our* efforts), is another indicator which could set off alarm bells, particularly if such talk replaces an emphasis on the command for believers to focus on obeying the Great Commission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **WITH GENTLENESS & RESPECT**

Again, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that *any* approach to one’s local church leadership about any of the above issues must be on the basis of solid evidence for concern. And it **MUST** be undertaken in the spirit and manner of II Timothy 2:23-25:

“But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. *The Lord’s bond servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition*, if perhaps God may grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth...”

It is a sad fact that professing Christians who feel that truth is under attack sometimes become very carnal in their response to those whom they perceive to be perpetrators of error. Even “in house” debates between evangelicals on non-essentials can become violent. Unfortunately, EC spokespersons and/or emergent sympathizers have been attacked, often personally, in very un-Christlike ways. This ought not to be. Such behaviour is a discredit to the gospel, and counterproductive to correction. While we certainly are commanded to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), such contending must be done in the spirit of our Lord.

May God grant wisdom and the enabling of His Spirit to all who earnestly and humbly desire to stand for the truth for the glory of God, genuine revival and blessing to a needy world.





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## ***NOTE!***

Two assaults on biblical truth which are not *directly* related to the emergent threat, and are thus beyond the scope of this booklet, are worthy of brief comment.

One is the incredibly widespread promotion of the New Age/occult message by the unbelievably popular talk-show celebrity Oprah. Her past effective promotion of New Age books such as *The Secret*, *A Course in Miracles* and numerous others has been increased dramatically with the recent Internet presentation of Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth*, which has reached an audience of two million in over 130 countries. Oprah is a spiritually dangerous force. Claiming to be a Christian ("who believes that there are many ways to God"), she is spreading New Age/occult lies. She is to be avoided and people should be warned of the extreme danger she poses.

A second concern is the Purpose Driven movement which is becoming increasingly emergent-friendly and unbiblical. For a carefully documented look at this issue readers are encouraged to explore *Deceived on Purpose* by Warren Smith and/or *Redefining Christianity: Understanding the Purpose Driven Movement* by Pastor Bob DeWaay. These are well-researched, but charitable, books with which not all may agree, but which present information that I believe should be carefully considered, and checked out against Scripture.

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