

From
Which Well
Are You Drinking?

EXPOSING THE DANGERS IN THE EMERGING CHURCH MOVEMENT

J. David Winscott

FOREWORD BY PASTOR CHUCK SMITH

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by J. David Winscott

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FOREWORD

The serious issues arising from the “Emerging Church” movement are troubling to our pastors and churches. David Winscott, who is active in our church, has helped us to grasp these urgent concerns by writing, *From Which Well Are You Drinking?* Pastors, teachers and serious students of the Bible will want to read this so that they can understand the inherent dangers of this movement that undermines the sufficiency of the Word of God and the sufficiency of the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming the Gospel of the Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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NEWS FLASH: YOU'RE TRAPPED!

Dear pastor-teacher, dear student of the Holy Scriptures, dear faithful believer who trusts in God's Word: here is an important news alert. You are trapped inside your language and you cannot know objective reality or truth. At best you can only construct reality and truth with the unique language of your own intimate faith-community. Therefore, what is true for your community may not be true for any other community of people.

Our news alert further advises us that these insights have been declared by a group of individuals who believe this is true because we are living in an era of 'postmodern thought'. In other words, this is their paradigm of how they have chosen to understand the rules of reality; and furthermore, they insist that this way of thinking applies to everyone. Doesn't this sound like relativism?

The implications of this are staggering for the Church of Jesus Christ and His Great Commission. The contemporary movement that sponsors this news alert is called the Emerging Church and one of its chief proponents in America is Brian McLaren along with a number of others whom we will be examining.

While we don't judge their hearts, we find their teachings so troubling that we are compelled to ask: from which well or wells have they been drinking? The fruit of any teaching is open to examination. If a Christian teaching is seriously troubling and appears unbiblical, then we must examine the various wells from which the teacher draws and constructs his belief systems, his paradigm, his rules of reality, his philosophy.

LET'S SAMPLE SOME WELLS

Let's briefly look at the wells of influence that our Lord speaks about in His earthly ministry. We will look at the wells of the Emerging Church movement writers; and then we will examine some of the wells of influence from which they have drawn their waters of discourse to develop their belief system.

JESUS OFFERS A DRINK FROM THE WATER OF LIFE—HIS WELL

Our Lord Jesus Christ encounters the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well (John 4:5 ff.) and asks her for a drink of water. Out of her confusion she questions the Lord. The ensuing discussion suddenly takes a serious turn. The real question being developed that will count for all eternity is: from which well are you drinking? Jacob's well is only physical water. In a matter of hours she will be thirsty again.

Jesus exclaims in verse 14, "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." If this didn't get her attention, mentioning her five husbands did. Perceiving Jesus to be a prophet, she must have thought, 'let's talk about worship!'

Addressing her misconceptions in verses 21-24, "Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Jesus Christ's focus in this conversation is all about clarity. The mountain will not quench your thirst. Jerusalem will not quench your thirst. Jacob's well will not quench your thirst. If you drink at those wells or any other well you'll be eternally dissatisfied. But more importantly, know this, only one well will leave you satisfied. It is the well or fountain of water springing up into everlasting life that only comes from Jesus Christ. Our thirst is quenched when we worship the Father in spirit and truth. It is Holy Spirit directed and it is based upon the truth revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. There is only one well that spiritually satisfies for all eternity.

ARE YOU REALLY TRAPPED?

Question: were Jesus, the Gospel writers, Paul, Peter, John, James, Jude, Moses, David, Solomon, the Prophets trapped inside their own language and, therefore, could not know objective reality and truth?

This “movement” is academically and biblically critiqued in two books: *Truth & The New Kind of Christian (The Emerging Effects of the Postmodernism in the Church)* by R. Scott Smith (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005); and *Becoming Conversant With The Emerging Church* by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005). Scott Smith is Assistant Professor of Ethics and Christian Apologetics at Biola University in California and D.A. Carson is Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. For a more detailed analysis you are encouraged to read these books.

My purpose is to briefly review some thought processes that, in my opinion, are dangerous and alien to historic biblical Christianity. I hope to be able to show you that the contributors to the Emerging Church movement have been drinking from another well of knowledge. I will show you that they have been drinking from the well of secular and humanistic philosophy from which they have been constructing their belief system, paradigm and rules of reality. What has been created is the so-called ‘Emerging Church movement’ with relativistic presuppositions.

THE BIBLICAL STARTING PLACE

The historic Christian faith has always started with the God who is there. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The God who is there is personal and has communicated to us in space, time and history. In the earliest days of Eden, God and our first parents, Adam and Eve, communicated in understandable language. A comprehensible language communication exchange that began during man’s innocence continued through and after the Fall of Adam and Eve.

Communication even remained possible when our Sovereign God confused and frustrated the idolatrous ambitions of a sinful, rebellious people with language diversification at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).

The presumption of continuing comprehensible communication is illustrated in the great covenants that our God made: covenants with Adam (Gen. 2:16; 3:15), Noah (Gen. 9:16), Abraham (Gen. 12:2), Moses (Ex. 19:5), Palestine, the land (Deut. 30:3); David (2 Sam. 7:16 ff.) and the New Covenant (Heb. 8:8). When the covenants were made by God and ratified, it was assumed that the covenant language was able to be both comprehended and transmitted.

In a post-Babel language diversified world, we assume that God presumed that what was said and understood could be translated and comprehended across linguistic barriers; the very diversification He had caused. The archaeological finds of ancient Near Eastern Suzerain-Vassal treaties of the second millennium BC offer abundant evidence that a host of conquering empires could impose their will upon the conquered and assume that the stipulations of the conqueror's imposed covenant could and would be understandably translated into the language of the conquered. It was a fact presumed and historically recorded. There was not a sense of being trapped inside one's own language and therefore unable to learn, translate, and comprehend another language.

The God who created has personally communicated; and He has given us an Owner's Manual. Our God has never played communication games of deception with us. He has spoken to us in propositional statements of truth. He says what He means and means what He says. His Word has always been reliable, trustworthy, and sufficient. We have discovered with assurance that the Bible does not contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave His great commission when He said: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and

lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Jesus did not recognize nor anticipate that His hearers and subsequent followers would ever be trapped inside their own language. His commission is doable because of the scope of His authority. It spans the entire earth. His commission is achievable because He designates the objective to be “all the nations.” The Greek word for nations is *ta ethne* which literally means ethnic groups which have language diversification.

If Jesus knew that we would be trapped inside our own language then why would He commission us to do something that can't be done because we are so trapped? We can go forth with the sufficiency of the Word of God in our hands knowing full well that the Word is translatable; and furthermore, we can go forth in the confidence of the sufficiency of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who indwells us, baptizes us, fills us and empowers us to do our Lord's bidding and, therefore, be obedient to Jesus Christ's great commission.

The Holy Spirit supernaturally used human authors to write the Word of God. We see no evidence whatsoever of the writers, the prophets, or the apostles believing that they were trapped inside their language. They believed that the gracious treasure of salvation by grace could be communicated across language barriers. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the gift of tongues (Acts 2:1-14) that enabled them to speak and declare the gospel message in other known languages that were previously unknown to them, the speakers.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude wrote the New Testament in the Greek language that was intended for circulation and translation in the linguistically diversified Roman empire. Our Holy Spirit inspired canonical texts that were intended to be translated into the numerous spoken tongues that were diversified by the Lord at Babel. The Hebrew and Aramaic canonical texts that came to be known as the Old Testament were already in place and received so that they too could be shared in translation with a language diversified waiting world. The Holy Spirit

providentially and supernaturally superintended their recognition and reception by the people of God (the church) attesting to a unified canon of Scriptures which comprises the Old and New Testaments.

There is no evidence nor hints which suggest that the human authors of the Holy Scriptures, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, ever suspected or believed that they were trapped inside their own specific language and that they could not know objective reality and truth for the purpose of communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When codified by agreed upon written and phonetic symbols called words, this language diverse planet of people can comprehend content translated across linguistic differences. Two plus two equals four and the music scales can be translated and comprehended. Likewise the words: tree, water, fire, sun, moon, stars, soil, man, woman, child, stench, alive, dead, hurt, cry, and laugh can be translated and comprehended. Of course, emotions and spiritual truths become much more challenging. With hard work, concepts and perception of reality can and have been translated from one language to another.

The history of Christian missions and the translation of the Holy Scriptures into hundreds of languages have demonstrated that it can be done. It has been happening in a fallen and broken world. The Lord's servants are at best spirit-filled yet not perfect. God's grace abounds and what is encouraging are the promises and faithfulness of God which assures us of His sufficiency: the sufficiency of the Bible (God's written Word) and the sufficiency of the power and work of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives.

When Jesus Christ gave us His great commission He gave us His inspired, infallible and inerrant Word to quote and teach and He gave us power and ability to accomplish it through the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Word is sufficient. And the Holy Spirit is sufficient. And certainly this means that God's grace is sufficient. God does not think that we are trapped inside our own language!

WHERE DID THIS EMERGING CHURCH THINKING COME FROM?

How did we arrive at this place where a modern movement within the Church of Jesus Christ announces and begins to teach that we are trapped inside our own language and cannot know objective reality or truth? Because of the real, dedicated, and destructive work of Satan, the church from the Apostolic Age forward has had to deal with heresies and a variety of “different gospel” teachings. In our time when well-meaning teachers begin drinking from other wells (humanistic, secular, and relativistic), foreign and eclectic belief systems are then introduced to the body of Christ, the church.

From post-Eden to the present both secular and sacred history records the journey of man in rebellion against his Creator. In this rebellious, resistant and sinful state fallen man has persisted at constructing his own belief system, paradigm, philosophy and rules of reality. Universities and academia have promulgated the history of these belief systems in full-blown departments of philosophy. The medieval church monasteries gave birth to the western world university system of higher education. From the beginning of that institutional movement theology was deemed the queen of the sciences.

The stage is set when the whole counsel of God (every verse, chapter, and book starting with Genesis and then moving in order through all sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is not consecutively and systematically taught by the local church’s pastor-teacher. The scene is set when the pastor-teacher offers topical messages from randomly selected texts while simultaneously ignoring vast portions and even books of the Bible. History confirms that it was just a matter of time until humanistic, secular, and relativistic philosophy would spill into and pollute the study of theology and the Bible.

The complex landscape of unbiblical, extra-biblical, and anti-biblical thought and practice in the church of the 21st century has its roots in virtually hundreds of years wherein divinity students, future pastors, and seminary professors drank deeply at polluted wells of academic knowledge.

When church pastors and leaders look to secular, humanistic, relativistic philosophy and corrupted theology for their belief systems, paradigms and rules of reality then distortions and erroneous teachings will always follow. Then surely the seeds of a “different gospel” are sown and cultivated. The 21st century church has significantly strayed from the dual sufficiency: the sufficiency of the Bible (as inerrant) and the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit (as indispensably powerful) in proclaiming the sufficiency of the Gospel of Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We will now look at the main contributors to the Emerging Church movement. We specifically want to identify and briefly comment on the academic and philosophical wells that they have been drinking from in order to construct their belief system, paradigm, and rules of reality. Their source wells invariably will lead to other wells of influence.

In the study of the history of philosophy certain seminal pre-suppositions are often carried forward by subsequent philosophers and, unfortunately, theologians as underlying building blocks of thought or they are modified to take on the appearance of new thought. Therefore, in some instances we will find it useful to trace these belief systems, paradigms, and rules of reality as they are developed in philosophical thought. (Since philosophical terms are used by the Emerging Church writers, a Glossary of those terms have been provided in the back of this work.)

We will now examine the contributors to this “Emerging Church” movement and the people who have influenced how they have developed their belief system, paradigm, and rules of reality. It is tediously necessary to identify the schools, colleges, theological seminaries, and universities they have attended. These institutions, with few exceptions, are philosophically committed to secularism, humanism, and relativism.

Please note that very few of the following institutions of higher learning have a reputation for believing and being committed to teaching the Bible as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God. This is the unfortunate state of affairs in our recent and

contemporary world of academia. Therefore, these are the wells from which one drinks when one studies under their faculties.

By way of parenthesis, it is important to note that exceptions have and can be made for the Lord's servant, as a pastor-teacher, to study in such spiritually hostile environments. If that person believes that he is called of the Lord to a special ministry in apologetics, then venturing into the enemy territory can certainly be guided and blessed by the Lord. Surely it would assume his calling has been confirmed by pastor-teachers and elders in the local church. The fruit of his ministry would be marked by his continued commitment to the dual sufficiency: the sufficiency of the Word of God and the sufficiency of the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

THE EMERGING CHURCH CONTRIBUTORS AND THEIR WELLS

Brian McLaren earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Maryland in English. He was awarded an honorary D.D. degree from Carey Theological Seminary in Vancouver, BC, Canada. He is senior pastor of the Cedar Ridge Community Church in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. area. He is a writer and lecturer whose name usually comes to mind first when this movement is discussed. *Time* magazine has named McLaren as one of the twenty-five most influential evangelical leaders in America. McLaren's latest book is *The Secret Message of Jesus*. Many questions are raised. Where is the Kingdom of God? How inclusive is it? Who defines the terms?

Today's Emerging Church has already moved the boundaries of His Kingdom. It has redefined God's Word and is fast embracing the latest versions of the old Gnostic quest for secret knowledge (*gnosis*) and self-actualization, whether through mystical experience or collective imagination. There is transformation. Stamping out faith in biblical absolutes is central to this transformation.

A mind anchored in God's Word won't compromise, but when that anchor is removed, the current of change can carry that mind anywhere. As Jesuit scholastic, Mark Mossa, wrote in his endorsement of Brian McLaren's latest book: "*The Secret Message of Jesus*

challenges us to put aside our sterile certainties about Christ and reconsider the imaginative world of Jesus stories, signs and wonders.”

According to McLaren specific evangelistic strategies will come and go, but beneath this evolving evangelistic stratagem, a new apologetic will take shape and it will be essential to the Emerging Church. Five themes in McLaren’s new apologetic are: (1) We don’t just offer “answers;” we offer mysteries. (2) We don’t debate minutiae; we focus on essentials. (3) We don’t push credibility alone; we also stress plausibility. (4) We don’t condemn our competitors; we see them as colleagues of sorts and reason with them with winsome gentleness and respect. (5) We don’t rush people; we help them at a healthy pace (*Church on Other Side*, p. 78-85). McLaren seriously believes that making disciples must not equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts (*A Generous Orthodoxy*). Doesn’t this sound like relativism? See his views discussed under Dangerous Issues # 3, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17.

Tony Jones studied at Fuller Theological Seminary and is currently a doctoral fellow at Princeton Theological Seminary. Youth pastor specialties is his focus. He also writes, lectures and blogs. He and McLaren believe that we simply cannot achieve a neutral viewpoint from which we can know reality. God’s viewpoint revealed in Scripture is not factored into their analysis. Jones asserts that the Emerging Church movement doesn’t have a position on absolute truth, or on anything for that matter. Do you show up at a dinner party with your neighbors and ask, “What’s this dinner party’s position on absolute truth?” No, you don’t, because it’s a non-sensical question.

In his book, Jones argues that faith itself needs to be reconceived along certain postmodern (see Glossary definition) lines of thought, which he has become aware of mainly from his studies at Fuller Seminary under Nancey Murphy. And he advocates that youth

workers need to start looking at the Bible through the same kind of eyes that their students have been born with, namely, postmodern ones and we should...“stop looking for some objective Truth that is available when we delve into the text of the Bible” (*Postmodern Youth Ministry*, pp. 8, 38, 201).

Jones believes justification is a process. It’s not a once-for-all act that occurs when a person puts his trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. It is a process of adopting the Christian way of life as one’s primary communal affiliation and identification (*Postmodern Youth Ministry*, p. 133).

Tony Jones’ book, *Soul Shaper*, is advocating the practice of contemplative spirituality and contemplative prayer in youth ministries. Contemplative spirituality is a belief system that uses ancient mystical practices to induce altered states of consciousness (the silence) and is rooted in mysticism and the occult, but often is wrapped in Christian terminology. The premise of contemplative spirituality is pantheistic (God is all) and also panentheistic (God is in all).

Contemplative prayer is based upon a technique or method in which one empties the mind of thought through repetition, usually of a word or phrase or focus on the breath. In the experience of silence there would be the absence of thought—all thought. The roots of this are both New Age and ancient Eastern mysticism such as Zen. Doesn’t this sound like relativism?

Jones is also commending worship practices from the Roman Catholic influenced Taizé Community in the south of France. With the blessings of the Pope, Taizé practitioners, likewise induce a contemplative state through music, song and silence enhanced with icons, candles, incense and prayer stations.

Steve Chalke studied at Spurgeon’s Theological College, London, and was ordained a Baptist minister and serves Christ Church & Upton, Waterloo, London. He is a U.K. writer, lecturer, and contributor to the Emerging Church movement discussions. See Dangerous Issue # 8.

Stanley Hauerwas received a B.A. degree from Southwestern University, Ph.D. from Yale University, D.D. from the University of Edinburgh and is on the faculty of Duke University Divinity School. *Time* magazine honored Hauerwas as America's foremost theologian in 2001.

Hauerwas says, "As Christians we claim that by conforming our lives in a faithful manner to the stories of God we acquire the moral and intellectual skills, as a community and as individuals, to face the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. Of course this remains a 'claim,' for there is no way within history to prove that such a story must be true" (*A Community of Character*, p. 96).

He believes there is no realm of facts that are just "out there," independent of how we characterize them. We learn these characterizations, or descriptions, by learning the language of community (*Vision and Virtue*, p. 71). According to Hauerwas and Kallenberg there simply is no way we can know how things really (i.e., objectively) are. Is there relativism here? We cannot escape from the influences of language and somehow get "out" and know reality as it is apart from language.

Hauerwas argues that though the gospel is the true story, there still is no way within history to prove it as such. Hauerwas believes it is a mistake to think we can give proof arguments for the true gospel to people who are trapped "inside" their own language. This is relativism. In this Christian postmodernist's view, conversion is not really a choice at all; rather it is "a long process of being baptismally engrafted into a new people, an alternative polis, a countercultural social structure called the church" (Hauerwas with William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, p. 46).

Hauerwas argues that we must adopt an embodied apologetic; we must live out consistently the gospel story, and in that way we can show nonbelievers the truth of our faith. We encourage them to "come and see" the truth of our story by "trying on" the Christian way of life—by learning how we, members of the Christian community, live, talk, and behave. That is, by becoming an insider in our community, they can learn to see the truth of our faith, even

though they never could know its veracity from the outside (*Resident Aliens*, p. 46-47).

Brad J. Kallenberg received a B.S. degree in physics and chemistry from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. from Fuller Theological Seminary. He is on the faculty of the Religion Department at the University of Dayton. He claims, as an evangelical philosophical theologian, there is simply no way to get “outside” of the influence of language to know the real world as it actually is.

He says, “Language does not represent reality, it constitutes reality” (*Ethics as Grammar: Changing the Postmodern Subject*, p. 234). Simply put, we are “inside” language and cannot get “out” and thus cannot know God as He really is; therefore, we make or construct God by how we talk in our own community. We make God into what He is for us.

Kallenberg believes that salvation is not some choice we make to accept Jesus into our lives (*Ethics as Grammar: Changing the Postmodern Subject*, p. 150). That kind of understanding is based on the mistaken idea that we can know the objective truth about religion, and then can make a decision for Jesus as opposed to some other religion or way of life. That kind of approach is one assumed by tracts such as *The Four Spiritual Laws*. Doesn’t this sound like relativism? Kallenberg draws heavily upon the views of Wittgenstein (reviewed later), Hauerwas, and Nancey Murphy at Fuller Seminary (reviewed later).

Dan Kimball received a B.S. degree in Landscape Architecture from Colorado State University, studied at Multnomah Biblical Seminary and received a master’s degree from Western Theological Seminary. He is pastor of Leadership Development at the Santa Cruz Bible Church in Santa Cruz, CA. He is a writer and lecturer. Kimball says that in the light of current biblical illiteracy we need to “deconstruct” and “redefine” biblical terms such as “Armageddon” and “gospel.”

Kimball quotes Leith Anderson approvingly, “the old paradigm taught that if you had the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching.” Kimball further believes we have neglected so many of the disciplines of the historical church, including weekly fasting, practicing silence, and *lectio divina* (Latin for spiritual or divine reading).

The disciplines and exercises of Ignatius Loyola, a 16th century Spanish Roman Catholic who founded the order of Jesuits, are based on this practice called *lectio divina*, in which certain words from Scripture are repeated slowly in a meditative fashion.

According to former New Age medium Brian Flynn, *lectio divina*, especially the way it is taught and practiced by many contemplatives today, is occult based: by taking passages of Scripture, which have an intended meaning, and breaking them down into smaller, separate segments, often for the purpose of chanting over and over, the true meaning of the passages are lost. Rather a form of occult mysticism is practiced with the hope and intention of gaining a mystical experience that God never intended when He gave the inspired words to His servants. Are the seeds of relativism sown in this?

Stanley Grenz (1950–2005) received a B.A. degree from the University of Colorado, M. Div. degree from Denver Seminary and a D.Theol. degree from the University of Munich, Germany.

John R. Franke received a D. Phil. degree from Oxford University, doctoral studies at Drew University. He is a member of the Karl Barth Society of North America and is now on the faculty of Biblical Theological Seminary.

Grenz and Franke co-authored the book, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. These authors believe that communicating the Christian faith involves not only ‘contextualizing’ the faith, but also ‘postmodernizing’ the faith. They believe that foundationalism, a view in philosophy that we can build our

beliefs on a set of ‘foundational,’ basic beliefs that give us a connection with reality, is a dead position, a holdover from the Enlightenment period in the history of philosophy.

They believe that we do not inhabit the world-in-itself; rather, we live in a linguistic world of our own making. Moreover, they do not believe that we can escape from a particular social context and achieve a transcultural intellectual vantage point. Since Grenz and Franke believe that foundationalism is in shambles, they think the way to go is linguistic “constructionism.” In other words, we live in a linguistic world that we ourselves make. We cannot know reality as it is, objectively; therefore, we construct the world(s) in which we live. This is the thinking of Wittgenstein who will be reviewed later.

According to these writers, even if God could bypass the influences of our language, we ourselves cannot escape them, and so any revelation He gives must be interpreted by us in terms of how we use our language. Therefore, no matter how well God reveals objective truth to us, we cannot know it as such.

We always are on the “inside” of language and therefore we must make for ourselves the meaning of the revelation. The result: the prospects for knowing revealed, objective truth are dismal at best and relativism hounds us.

Nancey Murphy received a B.A. degree from Creighton University, a Ph.D. degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Th.D. degree from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley (boasts of being an ecumenical, inter-religious institution of Protestants, Catholics, Unitarian Universalists, Greek Orthodox, Jewish and Buddhist). She is on the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary. She believes faith itself needs to be reconceived along certain postmodern lines of thought (*Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda*).

Murphy drinks deeply at the well of preeminent Harvard logician and philosopher Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000) who is in the philosophical school of Logical Positivism and Wittgenstein

(reviewed later). Quine taught that truth is embedded in our world, language and practice. There is no transcendent standard of truth. Nancey Murphy has transferred Quine's web of belief theory into Christian thinking.

She teaches that our beliefs are better understood as being related to each other in a mosaic or web of belief. Murphy advocates a postmodern alternative to foundationalism—a term used by philosophers for grounding the knowledge of the external world in self-validating beliefs. Foundationalists are certain we cannot be mistaken about these self-validating beliefs.

Murphy is an anti-foundationalist and here we see relativism. Murphy denies that the soul is a real entity. She believes the soul is a “higher level” of description of the physical reality of our being (*Whatever Happened to the Soul?* pp. 10, 139). Tony Jones and Brad J. Kallenberg studied under Nancey Murphy.

Alasdair MacIntyre received degrees from Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Manchester, England. He is on the faculty of the University of Notre Dame and visiting professor at Princeton University. MacIntyre believes that facts, that is, truths about objective states of affairs, are a seventeenth-century invention just like wigs for gentlemen (*Who's Justice? Which Rationality?* p. 357).

He teaches that all rationality is dependent on particular traditions, for there is no rationality-as-such. There are no self-evident truths, according to his view. Again we see relativism. We always work within language.

Facts are constructed by our language. One can conclude that there is no essence to Christian language; there is only Christian language that is written and spoken in discrete Christian communities at particular times and places. Hauerwas, Kallenberg, Murphy and Jones drink at his well.

Richard Rorty studied at the University of Chicago and Yale University and teaches comparative literature at Stanford Uni-

versity. He believes we simply cannot know the real world; we always work within our theories. What then does that imply for a doctrine like Jesus' historical, literal bodily resurrection? It cannot be a fact of history that we can know, so it ends up being just a 'construction' of our Christian community. Rorty drinks at Wittgenstein's (reviewed later) well.

Rorty suggests that truth may be a matter of what our peers let us get away with "saying" (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 176). He has given up on our ability to know the real world (i.e., an extra-linguistic one). He calls that "the world well lost." We always work within our theories. Relativism reigns (*The World Well Lost*, p. 69, 1972; *The Journal of Philosophy* p. 649-665). McLaren and Emerging Church thinking have been to this well.

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was educated at France's elite École Normale Supérieure. He has taught at the Sorbonne, Johns Hopkins University and the University of California, Irvine. Philosophers who influenced him include Foucault, Heidegger, and Nietzsche. Derrida's concept of "deconstruction" has to do with a literary approach, under the hermeneutics of suspicion, that hunts down tensions and inconsistencies in the text (believing all texts have them, including the Bible) in order to set them at odds with each other and thus deconstruct the text. This generates new insights that might actually contradict the actual text.

Derrida has significantly influenced McLaren and the Emerging Church movement. He is a postmodernist and full-blown relativist. He believes we are "inside" language. We cannot get at the meaning of an author of a text; instead, our interpretations tell us more about ourselves than about what the author meant.

Scott Smith asks, "What would that imply for Scripture? It would imply that we cannot know what God meant when He gave us His special revelation, and therefore its meaning is "up to us" (*Truth & The New Kind of Christian*, p. 135).

Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) was a Hungarian-British inter-disciplinarian whose thought and work extended across physical chemistry, economics, and philosophy. Born into a Jewish family he married a Roman Catholic. His doctorate is in physical chemistry from the University of Budapest. He taught at the Universities of Manchester and Oxford. He is a postmodernist. Polanyi collapses facts and values.

Scott Smith describes it this way. “That is, facts cannot be separated from the values we bring to the data as knowing subjects. To put the idea differently, in philosophy of science, he denies a distinction between discoveries and their justification, or supporting evidence, so that what supports a belief and the ‘facts’ that have been ‘discovered’ are not somehow independent of each other. Rather, ‘discoveries’ and ‘facts’ are what they are in light of a ‘fiduciary’ framework of beliefs and values (i.e., a set of beliefs held by a faith commitment) that people bring to the data” (*Truth & The New Kind of Christian*, p.136). The fabric of relativism is here. McLaren and the Emerging Church thinking have been to this well.

Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998) He was educated at Cambridge University and while there studied economics under John Maynard Keynes. He spent over 40 years as a Presbyterian missionary to India. As a prominent ecumenicist he was active in founding the World Council of Churches.

Newbigin’s book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, positions him squarely among the postmodernist thinkers. Newbigin believes truths about God are not timeless or that they don’t apply to all people. He feels the need to falsely dichotomize narrative stories and propositional truth.

He does not believe that reason in any way points to Christianity. Reason, he argues, is merely an English cultural bias, rather than a reliable tool for analyzing the world. His analysis, like other postmodern thinkers today, leaves us in a world where nothing can be known for sure.

The heart of Christianity is story interpretation. In place of unchangeable, objective propositions, is the script, or narrative, and subjective interpretation. His dichotomy is between facts, which is what we know, and beliefs (of which we can only say, “this is true for me”).

Newbigin argues that beliefs rest on an illusion. He affirms that there is no way to know if something (what I believe) actually corresponds with reality. This, of course, makes relativism inevitable. He was an influential writer whose work has been drawn upon by Stanley Grenz and Brian McLaren.

David Jacobus Bosch (1929–1992) was an Afrikaner who was educated at the University of Pretoria. He helped found the Southern Africa Missiological Society. He was an ardent ecumenicist and was active in the World Council of Churches.

Bosch believes the gospel as the “old, old story” may not be the true, true story, for we continue to grow, and even our discussion and dialogues contribute to such growth. In other words, the questions raised by postmodernism help us to grow. Here again is relativism.

We live with the paradox that we know no way of salvation apart from Jesus Christ, but we do not prejudge what God may do with others. We must simply live with the tension (*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*).

German theologians Oscar Cullmann and Karl Barth (see the next listings) highly influenced Bosch. Brian McLaren drinks at Bosch’s well.

Oscar Cullmann (1902–1999) a German Lutheran who was educated at Strassburg Seminary in Germany and on the faculty of Basel Reformed Seminary in Switzerland. He was active in the ecumenical movement and served as an unofficial non-catholic advisor to three popes.

Karl Barth (1886–1968) a Swiss theologian at the University of Basel who was a friend and contemporary of Oscar Cullmann. Barth also was a pastor and one of the most influential thinkers in the neo-orthodox movement. Kierkegaard heavily impacted Barth's theology.

His theology follows from the idea that God is the object of God's own self-knowledge, and revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling to humanity of the God who cannot be unveiled to humanity. Notice here that the Bible is not the Revelation; rather it points to revelation. The Bible contains revelation.

Barth believed that the Bible was the key place where the Word of God can be revealed to human beings, and that an existential leap of faith is required by the individual to hear what God has to say. Barth forthrightly rejects the inerrancy of the Bible.

Robert E. Webber (1934-2007) B.A. Bob Jones University, B.D. Reformed Episcopal Seminary, Th.M. Covenant Theological Seminary and Th.D. Concordia Theological Seminary. For 32 years he served on the faculty of Wheaton College. When he died he was on the faculty of Northern Baptist Seminary.

Webber authored: *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*; *Ancient-Future Time*; *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*; *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* and *Journey to Jesus: The Worship, Evangelism*; and *Nurture of the Church and The Divine Embrace*.

Webber's personal spiritual journey has taken him from the fundamentalism of Bob Jones University, through the Reformed Episcopal Church and Presbyterianism, then the high liturgy of Lutheranism to an even higher liturgy of Anglicanism in the Protestant Episcopal Church. He believes the road ahead should include the worship practices seeded in the ancient church starting with the earliest centuries following the New Testament era.

These re-discovered high church liturgical practices with an emphasis on Christ's presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist appear to be a Protestant embrace of Roman Catholicism.

In addition, Webber's list of recommended books that provide food for the soul authored by Roman Catholic mystics includes: Thomas à Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas Merton. He believes these writings are as safe as mother's milk.

Brian McLaren declares himself a fan of all of Webber's books.

HISTORICAL WELLS AND STREAMS OF INFLUENCE

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) He was raised in a Pietistic Lutheran home where the Bible was read daily and believed literally. With his monumental work, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant is viewed as the most important of the Enlightenment philosophers. He completely redefines the structures and framework of reality.

To comprehend his view of reality think of a two-story universe. The Upper Story is what he calls the noumenal (from the Greek word *nous* which means mind) or the realm of the mind and of transcendence. The Lower Story is what he calls the phenomenal or the realm of immanence where alone resides space, time, and history. There is a complete and total disjunction or disconnect between the Upper Story and the Lower Story. The criteria for knowing is the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) all of which takes place only in the Lower Story.

God, the supernatural, and miracles are stuff of the Upper Story because God and such things are not in space, time, and history. We can't really know them because at best they come to us from the Upper Story only in the form of myth, symbol, and saga. Therefore, we can't really know truth, the 'thing in itself.'

Kant reduces religion and Christianity to a system of conduct which he refers to as "the categorical imperative." He believes that Christ, at best, was the exemplification of the highest moral perfection. In his philosophical rules of reality Kant has grounded theology in morality instead of morality in theology. This well of thinking forms the major headwaters of much humanism and secularism as well as so called Christian liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. The seeds of relativism are in place.

When philosophers, theologians, and pastors buy into this paradigm or philosophical construct, and they have, they have made a major departure from the historic Christian Faith and the dual sufficiency of the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit.

In this discussion, the people we've looked at or we are about to look at, have been drinking at Kant's well or downstream from him. They include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Foucault, Barth, Cullmann, Bosch, Newbigin, Polanyi, Derrida, Rorty, MacIntyre, Murphy, Franke, Grenz, Kimball, Kallenberg, Hauerwas, Chalke, Jones, and McLaren. Kant's impact continues to this day to be monumental.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) Danish philosopher, theologian and pastor who was educated at the University of Copenhagen. He is viewed as the father of so-called existentialism. This is a philosophical movement that is generally considered a study that pursues meaning in existence and seeks value for the existing individual emphasizing subjectivity over objectivity.

Kierkegaard stressed the importance of the self, and the self's relation to the world as being grounded in self-reflection and introspection. He argued that "subjectivity is truth" and "truth is subjectivity." He insisted that doubt is an element of faith and that it is impossible to gain any objective certainty about religious doctrines such as the existence of God or the life of Christ.

Kierkegaard was a critic of the liberal Christian modernist effort to rationalize Christianity. Instead he maintained that Christianity is absurd (transcends human understanding) and presents the individual with paradoxical choices. The decision to become a Christian is not a rational decision but a subjective non-fact leap of faith.

Ludwig Wittgenstein opined that Kierkegaard was "by far, the most profound thinker of the nineteenth century." Prominent philosophers and theologians who admit to being influenced by Kierkegaard include: Karl Barth, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Richard Rorty.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) the son of a German Lutheran pastor. Nietzsche lost his way from the Christian faith after reading German theologian David Strauss' (1808–1874) book entitled *Life of Jesus* wherein the miracles of Jesus were determined to be mythical.

Philosopher Nietzsche believed there is no absolute truth so that all is relative. The virtues of Christianity are weak and must be abolished. Nietzsche became an atheist advocating God is dead. He developed the idea of 'will to power' (a concept latched on to by the Nazis) as the motivation within the individual whom he attributed as "superman."

He is regarded as the father of postmodernism; his views are important today and he was a major influence on Jacques Derrida. Following a mental collapse, the last eleven years of his life were lived as a vegetable under the care of his sister Elisabeth whose own husband died of suicide. Early commentators frequently attributed a syphilitic infection as the cause of his breakdown. What might have happened had Nietzsche not drank at the well of David Strauss?

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) was an Austrian philosopher who contributed several groundbreaking works to contemporary philosophy in the areas of logic, mathematics, language and the mind. A protégé of Bertrand Russell he later became a professor at Cambridge University. When Wittgenstein wrote at the beginning of the *Tractatus*, "The world is all that is the case. The world is the totality of facts and not of things," he was not only beginning a book (which with his genius mind he was convinced no one could comprehend) but also a movement in philosophy called Logical Positivism.

The movement was fully birthed in the 1920s in Vienna and nurtured in English academia. Logical Positivism advanced the Verification Principle as the criteria for acknowledging any reality. Simply stated, if it could be verified through the five senses (sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching) it could be believed.

This Principle was held to show that the meaning of a statement lies in its method of verification, and thus locates sense and meaning with experience. Anyone uttering a sentence must know under what conditions he calls it true and under what conditions he calls it false. All language is held hostage to these restrictions which, of course, dismisses the supernatural.

For respectable humanistic and secular philosophers this became a convenient dodge for ruling out God (who is beyond the physical realm), that is, until someone cleverly challenged them to verify the Verification Principle.

The erroneous thinking that comes out of the contemporary Emerging Church movement finds its roots here wherein we are being told that God exists as a human linguistic construct. When one grants the premise of this kind of thinking it is not hard to conclude that we are trapped inside our own language. Relativism reigns. The Postmodern influence on the Emerging Church writers is seen here.

A sad postscript to Ludwig Wittgenstein is to note his life was plagued with loneliness and despair. He never married, sought solitude and practiced homosexuality. Three of his brothers committed suicide. Notwithstanding, he is viewed by many as the greatest philosopher of the 20th century. Isn't it interesting that Wittgenstein was so fascinated with Kierkegaard's "leap of faith?"

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) Influential German agnostic existentialist philosopher who taught at the University of Marburg. He believed that everyday existence is inauthentic. He taught that we should strive for authenticity; authenticity comes by facing death when we focus on what's really important and don't worry about what others think about us.

Heidegger attacked Christianity saying it destroyed genuine culture. After Hitler's rise to power he joined the Nazi party. He believed in the importance of language which he described as the "house of Being."

His influence has led many to drop the pursuit of grammatical-historical hermeneutics when examining literature, including the Bible. Heidegger, a relativist, drank from the wells of Kant and Kierkegaard. Heidegger significantly impacted Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida.

Michael Foucault (1926–1984) A French philosopher who was on the faculty of the College de France. A Postmodernist and post-structuralist, which means he rejected philosophical definitions that claim to have discovered ‘truths’ or facts about the world which put him in the relativist camp. McLaren drank at this well.

Foucault was tormented by acute depression and even attempted suicide. He also lectured at the University of Buffalo and UC Berkeley. In 1975 he took LSD on a visit to Death Valley National Park and later called it the best experience of his life. In San Francisco in the 1970s and early 1980s he participated in the subcultures of anonymous gay sex and sadomasochism. Sadly, he died of an AIDs related illness.

18 DANGEROUS ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THE EMERGING CHURCH

(1) What is meant by the periods in history called ‘modernism’ (about A.D. 1550–1945) and ‘postmodernism’ (from A.D. 1945 to today)? First of all, it is important to recognize that experts in intellectual history and philosophy disagree (as would be expected) on precise definitions. Authors Scott and Carson do an excellent job discussing this subject.

The primary issue in the shift from modernism to postmodernism is epistemology, which is how we know things or think we know things.

Carson sums it up by saying, “Modernism is often pictured as pursuing truth, absolutism, linear thinking, rationalism, certainty, the cerebral as opposed to the affective—which in turn breeds arrogance, inflexibility, a lust to be right, the desire to control. Postmodernism, by contrast, recognizes how much of what we

“know” is shaped by the culture in which we live, is controlled by emotions and aesthetics and heritage, and in fact can only be intelligently held as part of a common tradition, without overbearing claims to being true or right. Modernism tries to find unquestioned foundations on which to build the edifice of knowledge and then proceeds with methodological rigor; postmodernism denies that such foundations exist (it is “antifoundational”) and insists that we come to “know” things in many ways, not a few of them lacking in rigor. Modernism is hard-edged and, in the domain of religion, focuses on truth versus error, right belief, confessionalism; postmodernism is gentle and, in the domain of religion, focuses on relationships, love, shared tradition, integrity in discussion” (*Becoming Conversant With The Emerging Church*, p. 27).

For Emerging Church writers, postmodern thought depends on several key beliefs: “(a) although a ‘real’ world may exist, we cannot know it as such; and (b) the only way we can know anything about this ‘real’ world is by our talking about it in the language of our community. But (c) we cannot know the essence of language, for that would be to know something as it really is. Instead, there are only languages-in-use in specific times and places. Thus, (d) our talking about reality shapes and ‘makes’ it what it is for us—we ‘make’ our world(s) by the use of our language(s) within our communities. Furthermore, (e) meanings are not some universal matter, either; they too are constructions made by the use of language within each community. Finally, (f) Christian postmodernists such as Hauerwas, Kallenberg, Grenz, and Franke agree that these points are true of the Christian community, or church, such that even though we say that Jesus is the truth, there still is no way within history to prove it as such” (Scott Smith, *Truth & The New Kind of Christian*, p. 95).

(2) The Emerging Church writers talk about Postmodernism as if the age of authentic Christianity has arrived.

(3) Although Brian McLaren can admit that Postmodernism is the latest in a long line of absurdities, it is less than clear as to why he wants so much of the church's approach to accommodate the absurdity. Therefore, there is a consuming preoccupation with social and cultural shifts that the Emerging Church movement feels must dictate the agenda for how the church is to be restructured and function. The Emerging Church writers have become Postmodernists in their attempt to speak to and reach Postmodernists.

(4) The philosophical study of epistemology explores how we know things. The Emerging Church advocates accommodating culture so that the gospel and biblical content is shaped by how the Postmodernist "knows" things from within his culture.

(5) The Emerging Church pastor is a "story-teller" rather than a Bible teacher-expositor because Postmodernists, who reject absolute certainty, want to hear stories rather than propositional statements of truth.

(6) The Emerging Church pastor should emphasize feelings and affections over against linear thought and rationality. Experience over against truth should be stressed in sermons.

(7) The Emerging Church movement presupposes an artificial dichotomy that says social history is more important than intellectual history.

(8) For Brian McLaren the substitutionary atonement doesn't address the question of why, if God wants to forgive us, he doesn't just do it. McLaren asks, how can punishing an innocent person make things better? "That just sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse. You know" (*The Story We Find Ourselves In*, p. 102).

D. A. Carson points out that nowhere in McLaren's writings (fiction and nonfiction) does he attempt to ground his treatment of the theories of the atonement in the Bible; and he invariably takes the time to take cheap shots at substitution and other elements taught in Scripture (*Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church*, p. 168).

U. K. Emerging Church contributor Steve Chalke adds this: "The fact is that the cross isn't a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement "God is love." If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus' own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil" (*The Lost Message of Jesus*, p. 182-183).

(9) D. A. Carson in (*Becoming Conversant With The Emerging Church*, p. 169) says, "Small wonder that numerous emerging leaders insist that the good news will focus on the importance of restoring one's lost relationship with God rather than salvation from God's judgment. Yet the Bible dares to speak of the wrath of God in terms every bit as personal as it speaks of the love of God. It is not surprising that McLaren is not faithful to what Scripture says on the cross of Christ, since he is not faithful to the nature of the judgment from which we must be saved. His reading of the Bible's story line turns out to be so selective that the uncomfortable bits are discretely dropped."

On the subject of hell, McLaren says the following in a radio interview: "This is one of the huge problems with the traditional understanding of hell, because if the Cross is in line with Jesus' teaching, then I won't say the only and I certainly won't say ... or even the primary or a primary meaning of the Cross ... is that the Kingdom of God doesn't come like the kingdoms of this world by

inflicting violence and coercing people. But that the kingdom of God comes through suffering and willing voluntary sacrifice; right? But in an ironic way the doctrine of hell basically says ‘No, that’s not really true.’ At the end God gets his way through coercion and violence and intimidation and, uh, domination just like every other kingdom does. The Cross isn’t the center then, the Cross is almost a distraction and false advertising for God.” Brian McLaren speaking, *From the Interview with Leif Hanson*.

(10) Because Christianity is multi-denominational, the Emerging Church movement folks court philosophical pluralism that denies any system that offers a complete explanation. Herein is relativism. A lack of understanding of the Holy Scriptures as the ‘whole counsel of God’ opens the door to demonizing absolutism in the Christian faith.

(11) Emerging Church leader Brain McLaren backs away from taking a strong biblical position on homosexuality because he feels it might hurt someone. In a Q & A session following a workshop, McLaren said he is not entirely clear that what the Bible means when it speaks of homosexuality is exactly what we mean today when we speak of homosexuality, and therefore he wants to be very careful not to condemn what the Bible does not.

(12) Within the Emerging Church movement there is an eclectic appeal to tradition while failing to use the Holy Scriptures as the adjudicating norm for assessing the legitimacy of the tradition. An example is returning to the use of candles, incense, and icons in worship as it was historically introduced in the several centuries following the Apostolic period of the early Church in the New Testament era.

(13) Brian McLaren states, “I am consistently over sympathetic to Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, even dreaded liberals, while I keep elbowing my conservative brethren in the ribs in a most

annoying—some would say ungenerous—way. I cannot even pretend to be objective or fair” (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p.35-36).

(14) Emerging Church writers advocate a worship service openness to unbelievers that would encourage them to participate in communion before making a saving faith commitment to Jesus Christ.

15. Brian McLaren states, “While I believe that actual miracles can and do happen, I am sympathetic with those who believe otherwise, and I applaud their desire to live out the meaning of the miracle stories even when they don’t believe the stories happened as written” (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 60-61).

(16) Brian McLaren, in effect, throws both sand and red herrings into the discussion of serious definitional differences in biblical, theological, and historical terms when he writes the subtitle of his book in the following way: “Why I am a missional + evangelical + post/protestant + liberal/conservative + mystical/poetic + biblical + charismatic/contemplative + fundamentalist/Calvinist + anabaptist /Anglican + Methodist + Catholic + green + incarnational + depressed-yet-hopeful + emergent + unfinished Christian” (*A Generous Orthodoxy*).

D. A. Carson responded appropriately in his book when he said, “I have read these chapters with considerable care, and I must try to explain a little why this is an attractive + manipulative + funny + sad + informed + ignorant + winsome + outrageous + penetrating + resoundingly false + stimulating + silly book. And I have used each of these words with more precision than McLaren has used with his” (*Becoming Conversant With The Emerging Church*, p. 162).

(17) What does it mean to be biblical? What Brian McLaren wants the most is to emphasize the Bible’s profitable purpose—all the good deeds and transforming character and conduct presupposed by a passage like 2 Timothy 3:16-17. All “truly biblical Christians (Prote-

stant, Catholic, Orthodox, liberal, conservative, charismatic, whatever)” (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 165) have done these deeds: that’s what makes them biblical. McLaren gives no hint that biblical fidelity may be tied in some way to the question of truth.

He believes the most important factor is reading the Bible as narrative, culminating in Jesus’ new command “that fulfills and supersedes the Torah” (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 170). By ascribing “truly biblical Christian” equally to Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, liberal, conservative, and charismatic, McLaren betrays a severe lack of being thoroughly grounded in the content of both the Bible and church history.

(18) It is both surprising and alarming to discover that a high number of the Emerging Church movement leaders come from conservative and fundamentalist church backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The Emerging Church leaders have been drinking at a variety of wells. These wells have been filled from their source with humanism and secularism. Philosophical pollution has created theological and biblical error and confusion. Paradigms, rules of reality, philosophies have been concocted by the creature (man) who is in rebellion against his Creator God who has revealed Himself in the written Word and the living Word, Jesus Christ who is our Lord and Savior.

The Apostle Paul encountered philosophical and theological relativism and idolatry on Mars’ Hill in Athens (Acts 17:16–34). Unchecked by the truth and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, relativism, humanism and secularism always leads to idolatry and there is nothing new under the sun.

Paul warned the Colossians: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8). This is what happens when

misguided pastors and professors drink uncritically at polluted wells of relativism, humanism, and secularism. Their sincerity notwithstanding, the Emerging Church movement's message has become postmodern in order to reach the postmoderns.

Over forty years ago Francis A. Schaeffer was on point when he said, "Whenever men say they are looking for greater reality, we must show them at once the reality of true Christianity. This is real because it is concerned with the God who is there and who has spoken to us about Himself, not just the use of the symbol 'god' or 'christ' which sounds spiritual but is not. The men who merely use the symbol ought to be pessimists, for the mere word 'god' or the idea 'god' is not a sufficient base for the optimism they display. This is the kind of 'believe-ism' which is demanded by this theology... It is no more than a jump into an undefinable, irrational, semantic mysticism" (from *The God Who Is There*).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agnostic—the philosophical position that states: “I can’t be certain to know if God exists.”

Apologetic—formally “defending” a position; e.g., defending the Christian Faith.

Confessionalism—those churches or denominations that have officially adopted historical statements of faith which they “confess” to believe. Presbyterians, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics are among those who are confessional churches.

Constructionism—a Postmodern philosophical view that we live in a linguistic world that we ourselves make or construct. We cannot know reality as it is, objectively, therefore we construct the world(s) in which we live.

Deconstruction—a Postmodern philosophical literary approach that utilizes the hermeneutics of suspicion, that hunts down tensions and inconsistencies in the text (believing all texts have them, including the Bible) in order to set them at odds with each other, and thus, deconstruct the text. This generates new insights that might contradict the actual text.

Dichotomy—a philosophical view wherein there is a disconnect, disjunction or mutual exclusiveness between two positions or entities; e.g., Immanuel Kant’s Upper Story and Lower Story wherein God is in the Upper Story and cannot reveal Himself in space, time or history in the Lower Story.

Eclectic/eclecticism—a belief system that draws from many and varied sources.

Ecumenicist—one who advocates that all Christian Church denominations should merge into one body regardless of the compatibility of their individual beliefs.

Enlightenment period—17th and 18th century Western Europe and England signaling the birth of modern science; intellectuals began to place empiricism, reason, science, and rationality on a par or superior to biblical revelation.

Epistemology—in the study of philosophy dealing with how we “know” things or think we “know” things.

Existentialism—a philosophical movement that starts searching for meaning in life with the struggle of one’s own existence rather than starting with God; it seeks value and meaning for the existing individual emphasizing subjectivity over objectivity. Kierkegaard pioneered this movement.

Foundationalism—a view in philosophy that we can build our beliefs on a set of “foundational” basic beliefs that give us a connection with reality; e.g. “God exists” is a “foundational” position in the Christian faith.

Hermeneutics—the established and accepted principles and discipline involved in interpreting the text of the Bible and/or any literary work.

Humanism—a view of life that rejects dependence upon faith, the supernatural, or divinely revealed texts.

Lectio Divina—Latin for spiritual or divine reading. Certain words from Scriptures are repeated slowly in a meditative fashion.

Liberalism—with respect to the Christian Faith, a belief system that inherently denies the supernatural and miraculous.

Linguistic—the scientific study of human language.

Logical Positivism—a philosophical school influenced by Wittgenstein wherein one believes only that which can be validated or verified by the five senses (sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching) called the Verification Principle.

Modernism—a philosophical frame of mind that is often pictured as pursuing truth, absolutism, linear thinking, rationalism, and certainty as opposed to Postmodernism (see in Glossary).

Mysticism—pertaining to religion with a subjective, feeling oriented, hidden or concealed meditative experience that cannot be objectively communicated or verified.

Neo-orthodoxy—a vast Christian theological system of thought with Karl Barth as the central contributor who did not believe in the inerrancy of the Bible.

Paradigm—a belief system one holds expressed as an ideal, example, model, pattern, standard, archetype or prototype.

Paradoxical—contradictory.

Panentheistic—a philosophical view that believes “God is in all.”

Pantheistic—a philosophical view that believes “God is all and all is God.”

Pietistic—a Christian’s concern for godly living and a personal devotion and relationship with Jesus Christ emphasizing the heart’s affections and spirituality.

Postmodernism—a philosophical frame of mind that recognizes how much of what we “know” is shaped by the culture in which we live, is controlled by emotions, aesthetics and heritage, and in fact can only be intelligently held as part of a common tradition without overbearing claims to being true or right. Postmodernism is understood in contrast to Modernism (see in Glossary).

Post-structuralist—a Postmodernist philosophical view that rejects historical philosophical, theological, and biblical definitions that claim to have discovered ‘truths’ or facts about the world.

Objectivity/Subjectivity—“Objectivity” is typically associated with ideas such as reality, truth and reliability. It is fact and data-oriented. The term “subjectivity” is more grounded in self-reflection, feelings, and introspection.

Rationality—using the mind for thinking, processing data, and problem-solving.

Relativism—is the view of life that believes there are no absolute truths; all is relative.

Secularism—a worldly view of life that is free of religious or spiritual qualities.

Transcendence/Immanence—the Bible teaches this is descriptive of God. He is transcendent, in that as Creator He is outside, separate, and beyond His creation. He is also immanent, in that He is manifested and involved in His creation; He reveals Himself in space, time, and history through the written word (the Bible) and the living Word (Jesus Christ).

Verification Principle—the tool utilized by the Logical Positivist philosophical school to validate or verify what they will believe about ultimate reality. If something can be verified by the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching) then it is believed to be real; accordingly, God cannot be verified by any of the five senses; therefore, they don't believe in God.

Zen—a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that places great importance on moment-by-moment awareness and 'seeing deeply into the nature of things' by direct mystical experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.
For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endures to all generations.*

Psalm 100:4,5

I am so thankful for the everlasting goodness and mercy of God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How grateful I am to know that the sovereign and loving power of God assures us that “...His truth endures to all generations.”

The Lord laid it upon my heart to discuss this promise in the context of the issues and dangers that have arisen from the Emerging Church movement in a conversation with Pastor Terry Reynolds. That conversation prompted a meeting with Pastor Terry and Pastor Paul Smith in the offices of Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship. Together we lamented statements coming from the Emerging Church folks. The question kept nagging us: If “His truth endures to all generations” how can we be “trapped inside our own language?” And there were many more questions; questions that challenged core biblical positions. I remember asking, “From which well have they been drinking?”

At this point Pastor Paul asked me to pray about writing something that, the Lord willing, would be helpful to our pastors and churches. If one of my pastors asks me to pray and consider a challenge, I know full well that I had better go before the Lord and seek His wisdom. And I did and here we are with: *From Which Well Are You Drinking? Exposing the Dangers in the Emerging Church Movement.*

My prayer throughout the writing of this project was that the Lord would be honored and the readers helped. This work was not designed to be an academic treatise, but a brief overview that would

help the reader get up to speed with regard to the serious problems that have arisen from this movement. I take full responsibility for any inadvertent errors. I'm sincerely appreciative of the help and full assistance of the staff of Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship and The Word For Today.

One never takes on a project like this in a vacuum. I'm thankful to the Lord for being a blessed man who has been surrounded by love and a family that has helped mold me into the person that I am today. They are a part of me as I walk with the Lord. I'm thankful for: Gloria, my dearest wife of over 40 years; my sons Peter and Andrew; Peter gave me Susie, my daughter-in-law and my grandchildren: Sophie, Maddy, and Evan.

Gloria and Andrew assisted me with a critique of my manuscript.

Since 1995, Gloria and I have been growing in the grace of our Lord under the teaching ministry of our Pastor, Chuck Smith, at Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA. It has been exciting to go through the Bible, verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter, from Genesis to Revelation. We love worshiping, hearing, and studying the "whole counsel of God." We have been so blessed by this pattern of teaching that comes from Nehemiah 8:8 which says, "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading."

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