

The Emerging Church and Bible Prophecy

By Roger Oakland
<http://www.understandthetimes.org>

Part One **Introduction and Biblical Foundation**

Throughout recent church history, there have been numerous trends that have come and gone. As a Christian for over twenty-five years I have seen a number of them. There was the name-it-and-claim-it positive-confession wave. This was followed by the Toronto Blessing and the Pensacola River. Then we were introduced to the Seeker Friendly movement followed by the Purpose Driven movement. Now it is the Emerging Church wave.

What is the Emerging Church? How big of an impact will it have?

It is very difficult to define the Emerging Church. In fact proponents say the Emerging Church it is not a church—it's only a dialogue or conversation. Some say that the Emerging Church is about reinventing Christianity for the 21st century. So what does that mean? Is it possible for Christianity to be reinvented and still be Christianity?

This very idea or concept causes me concern. Christianity must be based upon who Jesus is and what He said. His words have been written down in the New Testament. To claim that we can reinvent Christianity implies we have the liberty to alter the meaning of what the Bible has stated. In my view this is not only spiritually dangerous, it opens the doors for apostasy and the demonic influence Paul foretold would be occurring in the Last Days. ¹

Furthermore, the Emerging Church is not just some passing fad. In fact the numbers jumping on this bandwagon are staggering. Listen carefully as I quote from an article titled "New Faithful Practice Away from Churches" that describes how popular the Emerging Church is becoming:

Many theologians believe the Emerging Church Movement is the fastest growing group in Christianity. It has no national organization or coordination, so it's almost impossible to know just how big it is. Some estimates say there are 20 million of these new faithful in the U.S. alone—that's more than Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Mormons put together. ²

Or listen to the comments made by three different people interviewed for this article:

"It's really not a rebellion so much as it's just finding a new set of answers, a different way of being Christians," said Pastor Mike Clawson of the Christus Community Church.

"I think it's a new reformation. I think it's a new way of looking at the Bible," said Pastor Julie Clawson.

"I don't think it's simply a fad," said McKnight. "I don't think it's the future of all Christians. I think it is a movement that will have an impact on all churches in the United States." ³

In the near future, every pastor of every denomination will have to make a decision whether or not to support or reject the Emerging Church.

Man's Way or God's Way

Throughout biblical history there is a problem that continually resurfaces. Man's way, rather than God's way, may seem to be the right way, but ends up the wrong way. This is because God's Word has been rejected and ignored. From my perspective, the current Emergent Church movement fits this pattern.

The Bible is truly an amazing book. If we want to understand man's spiritual journey throughout history, all we need to do is read what has been recorded in the Word of God. While God has provided a way for us to seek after Him and to know Him, God's adversary has an agenda to get in the way. The last thing the devil wants is for man to be obedient to what God has said. Instead, his objective is to lead humanity astray. One of his greatest objectives is to delude people in the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ. In the last days this agenda intensifies.

When man listens to ideas and philosophies of men rather than to the inspired Word of God, it does not take long to be led astray. For example, we read in the Book of Proverbs:

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.⁴

Following men and their methods can be a dangerous situation, if these men are not following Jesus and His Word. For those who still need more persuasion, listen to what Jesus said:

This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.⁵

So, it appears that it is very possible for humans to be misled even in their endeavor to get closer to Jesus. Jesus said it was possible for people to be deceived even though they may believe they are heading down the right road by the things they are saying and doing.⁶ We must always evaluate our spiritual journey by staying true to the Word of God. Doctrine must always have a biblical basis. Dogma, tradition and experiences that contradict the Scriptures need to be reevaluated and abandoned.

With this said, let us consider what Emergent Church proponents are saying with regard to reinventing or re-imaging Christianity for the 21st century. What does this mean? Perhaps intentions may be good but is it possible to alter God's Word?

As we are going to see many Emergent proponents are suggesting a new faith must be established that is relevant for our generation. This faith becomes an "all-embracing" faith that includes a combination of ideas promoted by man in the name of Christianity but not found in Scriptures. Christianity no longer is based on what God has said, but upon what men are saying. Based on the historical pattern we find in the Bible, this is a perfect formula for spiritual disaster.

Biblical faith never changes. Faith by definition is based on hearing God's Word and acting accordingly. According to Emergent promoters, our generation needs to be stimulated with sensual experiences in order to find Jesus. These sensual experiences are not found in the Bible

but were popular during the Dark Ages and still embraced by the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox belief systems.

So my question is this: Is a new faith that is not based on the Bible still the Christian faith or is it another faith? Should we be concerned when we see Christianity headed in this direction?

Faith Undone

Biblical faith is based on trusting and believing in what God has revealed in His Word. The Bible states that it is impossible to please God without faith. ⁷ Is it not reasonable to suggest God's adversary would want to deceive followers into believing they had faith when instead they had been deceived? The Scriptures also tell us it is even possible to believe in another Jesus and another gospel because there is another spirit. ⁸

In order to understand Satan's plan to deceive man, we need to understand his agenda to confuse the issue of faith. If faith is trusting and believing in what God has said, then we would expect the adversary would do all he could do to cause man to doubt God or reject the authority of God's Word.

Recall Satan's line of questioning when he confronted Eve. Notice how the deceiver laid out his plan of attack:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ⁹

Satan asked this question because he knew exactly what he was doing. Satan's plan is simple. *You don't have to accept what God has said. In fact there is much more for you to know. You are humanly capable of achieving all that you desire.* Rejecting what God has said can cause one to reject God's plan of redemption and open the door for Satan's plan of deception.

Throughout the ages this plan has been effective. Further, the Bible states that in the last days this plan will become an even greater factor. There are numerous warnings about an apostasy that will prevail. This falling away from the faith will be inspired by doctrines of demons that will lead those who had once embraced the faith into another faith that is not biblical faith. ¹⁰

Besides the warnings Jesus gave regarding the spiritual deception that would characterize the last days, a question Jesus asked that is recorded in the Book of Luke, chapter 18 provides additional insight into Satan's plan to attack the foundation of Scripture in the last days. In Jesus' own words:

When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? ¹¹

With these warnings in mind, it seems to me that it would be wise to pay attention to current trends underway in the name of Christianity that emphasize a gospel that is far more experience-based than Bible-based.

The trend we will attempt to document that is sweeping the world is called the Emerging Church. Proponents claim that in order to reach the postmodern world, old methods must change if we are going to be effective in reaching the present generation. Rather than a gospel based on what God

has said and done, the new gospel is based on a stimulation of the senses that provides mystical experiences in the name of Christ.

Based on my understanding of the Scriptures, we are headed for a spiritual disaster.

Beware of Deception

Something has become apparent to me since the turn of the millennium. While many believers were anticipating the return of Jesus before the year 2000, 21st century Christians seem to have fallen asleep. No longer is Bible prophecy considered important. Warnings that would encourage believers to be alert and ready for the return of Jesus are seldom mentioned from the pulpit. Instead the trend is to be “purpose driven” and willing to establish the kingdom of God here on earth.

The fact that this very thing is occurring should be a reminder to us that this is what we should expect if the return of Jesus Christ is at hand. Not everyone who professes the name of Christ is going to be ready. Many will have fallen asleep.¹² Others will have left the faith because they have been seduced by doctrines of demons.¹³

Do you remember what Jesus told the disciples when He was asked what would be occurring at the end of the age before His return? He did not indicate that the whole world would be experiencing a spiritual revival turning to the gospel according to the Scriptures. He said that many would be deceived by many in His name.¹⁴

In fact the majority of the signs Jesus said to expect dealt with the topic of spiritual deception. He even forewarned there would be false appearances or manifestations of false Jesuses that would be associated with lying signs and wonders.¹⁵

Paul also warned about a time of deception that would dupe the world and the church:

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.¹⁶

Notice how Satan’s deceptive plan operates. First, the one being deceived must willfully reject the truth of God’s Word. Second, the delusion is accompanied by experiential factors such as signs and wonders that play a major role in drawing the one being deceived away from the truth for the lie.

Now, recall what Jesus said in Matthew 24, warning about lying signs and wonders. It would seem that experience will play a powerful role in the seduction of the world. This delusion will occur in His name.

Part Two **The Evangelization of Eucharistic Adoration**

I vividly remember the first time that I was confronted with the term “the Emerging Church”. I had just returned from South Africa where I had been speaking in several places on the topic of the “New Evangelization” program—the Roman Catholic program to win the world to the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Christ. A lady who had heard me speak sent me an e-mail with an attached article about the Emerging Church. She asked me a question: “Do you think this could be the bridge to the Roman Catholic ‘new evangelization’ program you were telling us about?”

For those who are not aware of the New Evangelization program, let me provide a brief overview. The Roman Catholic Church has a plan to establish the Kingdom of God here on earth and win the world to the Roman Catholic Jesus—the Eucharistic Christ. It is believed the “triumph of the Eucharist” will be accomplished when the world (including the separated brethren) come under the rule and reign of Rome and the Eucharistic Jesus.

Many Protestant evangelicals are not aware of the difference between the Roman Catholic Jesus and the Jesus of the Bible. The Eucharistic Jesus requires a Roman Catholic priest to conjure up his presence through the power of transubstantiation, the focal point of Mass. This “Jesus” then is offered as an unbloody sacrifice—the sacrament of the Eucharist.

According to the Bible, the sacrifice has been made and no further sacrifices are required to dispense salvation. When Jesus died, He said “It is finished.” For a detailed overview of this topic see *Another Jesus? The Eucharistic Christ and the New Evangelization*.¹⁷

Eucharistic Evangelization

In October of 2004, John Paul II called for “The Year of the Eucharist” as part of his evangelistic plan to bring the world to the Eucharistic Christ. In April of 2005, he died. Pope Benedict XVI picked up Pope John Paul’s mission immediately. He called the faithful to “intensify” devotion to the Eucharistic Jesus.

On April 20, 2005, in his first pontifical homily, Pope Benedict XVI made a clear statement. He noted to the world the significance of his pontificate in that he had been crowned pope “as the Church is living in the special year dedicated to the Eucharist.”¹⁸

Quoting from this article titled “Pope Benedict called on the faithful to intensify devotion to the Eucharistic Jesus,” we read:

(The Pope) called it a “providential coincidence”, and “an element that must mark the ministry to which [he has] been called.” “The Eucharist,” he said, “the heart of Christian life and the source of the evangelizing mission of the Church, cannot but be the permanent center and the source of the petrine service entrusted to me.”¹⁹

Pope John Paul II initiated his “missionary vision” focused on a “rekindling of amazement” of the Eucharistic Jesus at a Eucharistic Congress, in June of 2000. Further, in an encyclical he wrote in April of 2003, he called for Eucharistic adoration to be reemphasized to draw the faithful to “adoring the Eucharistic Jesus”—the Jesus that can be placed in a monstrance and put on display.

In October of 2004, Pope John Paul initiated the “Year of the Eucharist.” Therefore, Benedict was beginning his pontificate where the previous pope left off. Quoting again from the article:

Pope Benedict asked the faithful to “intensify in coming months love and devotion to the Eucharistic Jesus and to express in a courageous and clear way the real presence of the Lord, above all through the solemnity and the correctness of the celebrations.” “The devout daily celebration of Holy Mass,” he said, “the center of the life and mission of every priest, contributes to this end.” “Nourished and sustained by the Eucharist,” he added, “Catholics cannot but feel stimulated to tend towards that full unity for which Christ hoped in the Cenacle.”²⁰

Notice the statement that Benedict made: “Catholics cannot but feel stimulated to tend towards that full unity for which Christ hoped”. You see this is the heart and core of the “New Evangelization” that Pope John Paul initiated. The goal is to bring the separated brethren back to the Mother of All Churches and the Eucharistic Jesus.

Second Coming Roman Catholic Style

I am amazed so few people who are students of the Bible do not understand the current Roman Catholic New Evangelization program that is presently underway. What is worse, there are many well-known teachers of the Bible who are moving into the “Emerging Church” movement and are now advocating the Roman Catholic view of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Pope John Paul declared the Year of the Eucharist in October of 2004. Before the pope died in April of 2005, news from Rome about the importance of the Eucharist came out daily. Since Pope Benedict replaced Pope John Paul II as pope, the New Evangelization program has further intensified.

On June 12, 2005, Zenit News Agency reported on the pope’s message to thousands gathered in St. Peter’s Square. He said: “Dear Brothers and Sisters! The Year of the Eucharist continues, called by our beloved Pope John Paul II, to reawaken ever more, in the consciences of believers, wonder toward this great Sacrament.”²¹

Then referring to a youth gathering that would end the Year of the Eucharist in Rome, October, 2005 he said: “I entrust this meeting to the Virgin Mary, that she may teach us to love Jesus ever more, in constant meditation of his Word and adoration of his Eucharistic presence, and help us to make young generations discover the ‘precious pearl’ of the Eucharist, which gives true and full meaning to life.”²²

While this article was of interest to me, another Zenit article posted the same day on the Eucharist was even more significant. In the article titled “Eucharist in the Pontificate of Benedict XVI: Scott Hahn on the New Pope's Potential Revival,” the following statement was made:

Benedict XVI's pontificate is not about restoration of the liturgy so much as re-appropriation -- of the mystery of the Eucharist. So says Scott Hahn, professor of theology and Scripture at Franciscan University of Steubenville, director of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology and author of *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* (Doubleday). He shared with ZENIT how he thinks Benedict XVI's teachings will enhance the faithful’s understanding and experience of the Eucharist.²³

Then in response to a question asked by Zenit about the pope's view on the Eucharist, Hahn replied:

The Eucharist is our encounter and our communion with the Blessed Trinity. That is the heart of life. It's the source of life. It's the summit of life. Communion with the Blessed Trinity is the very definition of heaven, so it doesn't get any better than that. The amazing thing is that we have heaven in every Mass. This is a theme Cardinal Ratzinger returned to repeatedly in many of his books. The coming of Jesus Christ – what the Greek New Testament calls “parousia” – is not simply some far-off event. It is his presence in the Eucharist. Fundamentalists reduce the meaning of “parousia” to Christ's coming at the end of time; but for the first century Greek speakers the word meant “presence.” Catholic theology holds on to that original meaning.

The presence of “Christ” in the Eucharist is the Second Coming Roman Catholic style. Unfortunately, many evangelical Protestants are not aware.

The theme of this paper will be to provide the documentation to show that the Emerging Church is one of the many bridges that is being established to bring the “separated brethren” back to the Mother of All churches. The prophetic significance of this trend is of paramount importance.

Part Three

A “New” Faith for the 21st Century

For many, the term *Emerging Church* is still not clearly understood. Before we examine the basic beliefs being promoted by the Emerging Church movement in detail, I want to look at some of the ideas and teachings promoted by Pastor Doug Pagitt, founder of Solomon’s Porch, an Emergent church located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This will give us a general and brief overview of what the Emergent Church is and where it seems to be headed.

As we examine some of Pastor Pagitt’s ideas, we will see the pattern emerging. I will be using a number of statements made by Pagitt taken from his book *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith*, published by Zondervan²⁴ to document this pattern.

Pastor Pagitt’s Solomon’s Porch would be considered a typical Emergent church and certainly one that many other pastors are following as they also become emergent. Thus by the end of this section we should be able to provide a fairly clear overview of the pattern emerging in the Emerging Church.

So, with this preface, let’s begin by examining Doug Pagitt’s view that Christianity must change for our generation. Here is what he states in his book:

It seems to me that our post-industrial times require us to ask new questions—questions that people 100 years ago would have never thought of asking. Could it be that our answers will move us to re-imagine the way of Christianity in our world? Perhaps we as Christians today are not only to consider what it means to be a 21st century church, but also and perhaps more importantly—what it means to have a 21st century faith.²⁵

This statement made by Pagitt typifies one of the basic beliefs of the Emergent Church movement. In a zeal to “reach” this present generation, Christianity must change, he states. This change that requires Christianity be “re-imagined” for 21st century Christians, would require the Word of God, the very foundation of the Christian faith, to be altered to meet today’s standards and beliefs.

There is simply no other way of interpreting Pagitt’s statement. He and other Emergent promoters are suggesting we must not only change what it means to be a Christian, we must change the foundation of Christianity by coming up with a “new faith for the 21st century”.

However, anyone grounded with biblical faith should be able to detect that Pagitt’s proposal creates a problem. If faith is based on the Word of God, a “new faith” that is not based on the Word, is not biblical faith and therefore cannot be the Christian faith. This direction would clearly seem to be dangerous. Especially in light of the fact there are plenty of warnings from the Bible regarding being spiritually seduced in the last days.

It is a noble cause to reach the postmodern generation for the cause of Christ. But we must also remember, Jesus Christ challenged us to follow Him and to be obedient to His Word. Re-imagining Christianity for the sake of establishing a “new faith” for the 21st century may well be part of the apostasy that the Bible warns about.²⁶

The Process of Re-imagining

The Emergent Church claims that Christianity needs to be re-imagined for the 21st century. But what is meant by re-imagining? What will this reinvented Christianity look like?

Emergent Church leaders and promoters often provide testimonies explaining how they became involved in their journey to reinvent Christianity. In his book *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith* ²⁷ Doug Pagitt tells how and why his church originated:

Our attempt at being a church began in January 2000 in a small second-floor loft space in a hip little neighborhood of Minneapolis called Linden Hills. The church was actually birthed much earlier from conversations between a few friends who shared a desire to be part of a community of faith that not only had a new way of functioning but also generated a different outcome. At that point I had said, on more than one occasion, that I didn't think that I would ever be able to stay Christian in any useful sense over the next 50 years if I continued the expression of Christianity I was currently living—pretty disconcerting stuff for a pastor. ²⁸

Pastor Pagitt then explains why he felt he needed to find a new expression of Christianity that was a different expression from what he had been accustomed to previously. In his own words:

This was not a crisis of faith in the typical sense; I never doubted God, Jesus or the Christian faith. And yet I had a deep sense, which has actually grown much deeper since, that I needed to move into a Christianity that somehow fit better with the world I lived in, not an expression that reconstituted another time. ²⁹

This statement by Pagitt is interesting in light of what he wrote just a few pages later in his book in regard to how his church plans to reinvent Christianity:

We also understand ourselves as part of a global community. We are required to live our local expressions of Christianity in harmony with those around the world. The beliefs and practices of our Western church must never override or negate the equally valid and righteous expressions of faith by Christians around the world. It is essential that we recognize our own cultural version of Christianity and make ourselves open to the work of God's hand in the global community of faith. ³⁰

Notice the emphasis on a “global community of Christian faith” that permits all “expressions of faith” by anyone and everyone who claims to be Christian. As we are going to see, Pagitt's idea of reinventing Christianity is based on an ecumenical view that permits ideas, beliefs and experiences that are not found in the Bible.

According to the Emergent Church agenda, in order to find a new expression of faith acceptable for the 21st century, Christianity needs to be open to anything and everything that has ever been called Christian. Brian McLaren, a prominent leader of the Emergent Church calls this new faith a “generous orthodoxy.” ³¹

While this “generous orthodoxy” is very generous in allowing a smorgasbord of ideas to be proclaimed in the name of Christ, many of these ideas are foreign to the Scriptures and even anti-Christian.

What Ever Happened to the Bible?

If faith comes by hearing the Word, and the Word is not heard, what kind of faith will emerge in the Emerging Church? Instead of faith, the Emerging Church is creating a famine in the land where the Bible was once taught.

Many people I meet at conferences who come from a wide variety of church backgrounds tell me that their church they had attended for years has radically changed. Their pastor no longer teaches the Bible. Instead the Sunday morning service is a skit or a series of stories. The Bible seems to have become the forbidden book. While there are pastors who do still teach the Bible, they are becoming the exception rather than the rule.

So why is this happening? Is this part of the Emerging Church agenda to reinvent Christianity? Emergent leaders are often quoted as saying the message remains the same but our methods must change if we are going to be relevant to our generation. However, what happens if the message promoted in the name of Christ is no longer based on a chapter and verse? Sound doctrine seems to be taking a back seat to a teaching that no longer offends those who are listening. The measure of success for many pastors today is how many are coming, rather than how many are listening and obeying what God has said in His Word.

Once again, let's consider how Pastor Doug Pagitt uses the Bible at Solomon's Porch. Quoting from his book *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith*:

At Solomon's Porch, sermons are not primarily about extracting truth from the Bible to apply to people's lives. In many ways the sermon is less a lecture or motivational speech than it is an act of poetry—of putting words around people's experiences to allow them to find deeper connection in their lives... So our sermons are not lessons that precisely define belief so much as they are stories that welcome our hopes and ideas and participation.³²

According to Pagitt, the Bible is not about truth and doctrine but about hopes and ideas and participation. Besides, rather than a pastor teaching the Bible, there should be equal opportunity to dialogue in order to come to a consensus of what the Bible might be saying. Pagitt writes:

To move beyond the passive approach to faith, we've tried to create a community that's more like a potluck: people eat and they also bring something for others. Our belief is built when all of us engage our hopes, dreams, ideas and understandings with the story of God as it unfolds through history and through us.³³

This potluck brand of Christianity that tends to take the Bible lightly has some serious flaws from a biblical perspective. While certain parts of the Bible may be read as poetry, it is much more than putting words around people's experiences. The Bible tells us that God is always right and man is almost always wrong. When we rely upon human consensus we will end up with man's perspective and not God's revelation. This is a dangerous situation that has the potential to lead people astray.

When the Word is Not Heard

When I first heard about the Emerging Church and the various experiences that are characteristic of this trend, I was suspicious. In an effort to reach this present generation for Jesus, it seems that

many are looking to experiences in His name that will appeal to the postmodern generation who are accustomed to having their senses stimulated.

There is something to be learned from history that will help us to understand what is going on in the Emerging Church. Before the Reformation and during the period known as the Dark Ages, the Bible was known as the forbidden book. Thanks to the Reformers and the sacrifices they made, the Bible was translated into the language of the common people.

The light of God's Word began to shine into the darkness and people were delivered from the control and corruption of the Roman Catholic Church and the power of the pope and the priests. God's grace was revealed and people were saved and released from bondage. People began to understand that salvation is a gift of God and that the sacrifice was made once and for all by Jesus when He died upon the cross.

The point I am making is simple: When God's Word is purposely hidden by people professing to be Christian, the darkness created because of the lack of God's Word leads to a need for spiritual encounters in the flesh. In order to convince the faithful they are being spiritually fed, leaders replace the Word with experiences. Thus, the reason that icons, candles, incense, liturgy, praying to the dead (including Mary) and the sacraments are deemed necessary for salvation.

Now, let's examine something that has happened at Doug Pagitt's Solomon's Porch Emergent Church as the Word becomes less and less important. In his own words:

During a recent Life Development Forum we offered a session on Christian practices. In one of the four weeks we introduced the act of making the sign of the cross on ourselves. This gesture has become a very powerful experience for me. It is rich with meaning and history and is such a simple way to proclaim my faith with my body. I hold the fingers on my right hand in the shape of a cross, my index finger lying over the top of my outstretched thumb. I use the Eastern Orthodox pattern of touching first head, then heart, then right lung followed by left. Others in the group follow the Roman Catholic practice with left before right.³⁴

So what is the significance? Why are "powerful experiences" replacing God's Word? As we continue this paper on the Emergent Church it will become more and more apparent. Powerful experiences similar to what occurred during the Dark Ages are taking the place of expository Bible teaching. This makes sense in light of what happens when the Bible becomes the "forbidden book."

Home to Rome

When the Evangelical Christians begin to imitate Roman Catholicism in order to provide powerful experiences that supposedly bring people closer to Christ, we are headed down a slippery slope. The Emerging Church pattern seems to be headed this way.

When I do a series of radio programs or write commentaries posted at our website warning people about the dangers of ecumenism, I know what the response will be ahead of time. It is not popular to stand up for biblical truth these days. The message we often hear here is one of unity at any cost. At a recent pastors' and church leaders' conference, I was told by an organizer that I was not to speak on the topic of the Emerging Church. This person considered the topic unnecessary and divisive.

The Emerging Church, in my view, is experiential, ecumenical and a dangerous diversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ—that is the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. As we have been documenting, the Emerging Church leads away from the scriptural to the mystical. This pathway that reintroduces Roman Catholic mystical ideas, practices and beliefs is a step back towards the Dark Ages.

While the signs of the times indicate the return of Jesus and the end of the age and the establishment of His kingdom, the Emerging Church and other church trends like the Purpose Driven movement, are promoting the idea that the kingdom of God can and will be established before Jesus returns through and by human effort.

This plan that is being established sounds strangely familiar. As I continue this paper I will document how the Emerging Church and the practices that are promoted, fit perfectly into the New Evangelization program to establish the Eucharistic Reign of Jesus here on earth with headquarters in Rome.

For now, as we conclude our overview of Doug Pagitt and Solomon's Porch, I am going to provide one final piece of documentation that helps confirm that the Emerging Church is another road to Rome. Listen as I read from Pagitt's book:

The first day of Lent this year brought the first Ash Wednesday gathering in our church's history and in mine... Until this point, Ash Wednesday had not been part of my Christian faith experience. Not only had I never applied ashes to anyone's forehead, but I had also never had them applied to mine. After this experience I wondered how I could have celebrated 19 Easters as a Christian without this tremendous experience.³⁵

Now, let's review what we have learned about the Emerging Church as demonstrated by what is being taught and presented by Pastor Doug Pagitt at Solomon's Porch. First, Christianity must be reinvented and a new faith established for the 21st century. Second, Christianity must be open to all expressions of Christianity, even those expressions that are not biblical. Third, the Bible needs to be augmented by experience. Fourth, these powerful experiences have been reintroduced from Roman Catholicism.

Part Four

What is Emerging in the Emerging Church?

Attempting to come up with a definitive explanation to describe all that is happening in the Emerging Church movement is an impossible task. Probably, the best way to do this would be to examine a number of books and articles that have been written on this topic and come up with some general trends that seem to be consistent. In this section I will attempt to do this.

I will be quoting various promoters of the Emergent movement. Sometimes authors are offended and upset when they are quoted, but the quotes are statements that they have made and not words that I have invented.

Further, it is *not* my objective to examine the personal motives of the individuals who are the promoters of these ideas. I have had dialogue and discussion with several leading Emerging Church authors about our differences. In every case, they indicate to me their sincere desire to reach this generation and provide a relevant form of Christianity.

My greatest concern about the Emerging Church is the overall direction that I discern it is headed and the role it will play in light of Bible prophecy. This direction, in my opinion is away from a faith in Jesus that is based on His Word, to a faith driven by experience headed towards Roman Catholicism. Second, it will be apparent that Bible prophecy is often discredited in an attempt to emphasize a social gospel that promotes the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth now by human effort.

When I have pointed this out to Emergent leaders, they insist they are not departing from the Scriptures, only making the Scriptures relevant for today. While I find such an explanation difficult to understand based upon what they are doing and saying, I am willing to say that many are being deceived and are not aware what is happening in the overall scheme of Last Days deception.

My main purpose in documenting facts for this presentation will be to show that the Emerging Church is providing a bridge to Roman Catholicism and particularly to the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Christ. My method of doing this will be based on Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding how we are to confront those who have been sidetracked by Satan's devices and don't know it:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.³⁶

Paul's words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provide the strategy we are to take in order to point those who have been misled back to the truth. Satan's plan is to convince sincere Bible-believing Christians that the Bible is no longer our foundation for faith. Obviously, deception occurs when one has been misled without realizing it. In order to salvage those who have been caught in Satan's trap, we are to reach out with humility, gentleness and patience praying that minds will be opened to the truth and the pathway to deception will be hindered.

Beware of the Wave

I have been a Christian for over twenty-five years. I have seen a number of Christian trends come and go. The present wave, the Emerging Church, is different from the past waves. It seems to be gathering momentum as more and more get on board.

About twenty-five years ago, not long after I had become a Christian, I was visiting with an elderly gentleman who had been a Christian for most of his life. We were discussing the current wave sweeping Christianity at that time. A portion of the fellowship we belonged to was being swept into the Toronto Blessing wave. This wave was the reintroduction of the Latter Rain wave that took place in the late 1940s.

I will never forget the words this man used to describe what was happening to the body of Christ. "Satan's plan to deceive the world impacts the church just like waves crashing against the shore," he said. "As we get closer and closer to the return of Christ these waves of deception will be more frequent and influence more and more people," he continued.

Then he shared this statement still etched into my mind: "There is a wave coming before Jesus returns that will sweep the world," he said. "But before this final wave of apostasy hits there will be other significant waves preparing the way for the final wave."

Twenty-five years have passed and this man's words have proven to be prophetic and true. The waves currently breaking are preparing the church for the Last Days apostasy that Jesus and Paul foretold. The Emerging Church, I believe is one of the preparatory waves.

Leonard Sweet, author of *Soul Tsunami* strongly supports the idea that a major spiritual awakening is just ahead and that we are currently experiencing a wave that will change the world. On page 39 of his book he wrote:

God is birthing the greatest spiritual awakening in the history of the church. God is calling you to midwife the birth. Are you going to show up? ³⁷

According to Sweet, the "spiritual awakening" is a wave that is impacting the post-modern generation and is characterized by a hunger for experience. He wrote:

A spiritual tsunami has hit postmodern culture. This wave will build without breaking for decades to come. The wave is this: People want to *know* God. They want less to know about religion than to *know God*. People want to experience the "Beyond" in the "Within." Post-moderns want something more than new products; they want new experiences, especially new experiences of the divine. ³⁸

Numerous books published in the Emergent category have been endorsed by Sweet. He is looked upon as a major leader in the promotion of the Emergent Church. In 1991, he wrote a book titled *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic*. A statement he made on page 69 of this book is a good summation of his view of what direction the Christian faith will be heading in the future:

Faith is not simply intellectual understanding, or an act of human intention, or following some "how-to" salvation manual, or ascent to creedal formulations. Faith is not a matter of doing or even being, but an experience of becoming. Experiencing is faith's most fundamental activity. ³⁹

As we will see, an experience-based Christianity is becoming the foundation for the Emerging Church.

Experience Driven Christianity

Dan Kimball is the author of *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. Kimball has founded a church called Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California. Kimball makes the following statement in the introduction of his book about the need for Christianity to change and for the Emerging Church to provide the leadership for this change:

I believe with all my heart that this discussion about the fast-changing culture and the emerging church must take place. While many of us have been preparing sermons and keeping busy with the internal affairs of our churches, something alarming has been happening on the outside. What once was a Christian nation with a Judeo-Christian worldview is quickly becoming a post Christian, un-churched, un-reached nation. New generations are arising all around us without any Christian influence. So we must rethink virtually everything we are doing in our ministries. ⁴⁰

It is a fact that the spiritual climate in North America has changed radically over the past number of years just as Dan Kimball has stated. Kimball uses the term “post-Christian era” to describe the days in which we are living. He sincerely believes that the Emerging Church and the experiences that it provides will be the best way to reach our present generation.

One of the arguments for promoting the Emerging Church in the post-modern era goes something like this: *While the seeker-friendly era was successful in bringing a generation of “baby-boomers” to Jesus, that time is past. Now we need to find new innovative methods that will reach the present generation for Jesus. Post-moderns are seeking after experiences that stimulate their senses. The Emerging Church can provide these kinds of experiences.*

Michael Slaughter, in his book *Unlearning Church: Just When You Thought You Had Leadership All Figured Out*, describes the move away from the seeker-friendly, non-offensive style of Christianity towards a mystical-experiential brand the following way:

In the seeker age, the church tried to make its teachings and its services more user-friendly, practical, and accessible, and to market them to the un-churched. In the post-seeker age Future Churches are not as concerned with marketing services for unbelievers or entertaining believers as they are in ushering people, believers and unbelievers alike, into the presence of God. Intentionally, they do not water down their teachings or ratchet down the intensity of the service to make it more appealing to unbelievers. ⁴¹

In order to “appeal to believers and unbelievers” and “usher them into the presence of God”, a number of innovative ideas are being promoted by Emerging Church leaders. Kimball devotes a major portion of his book to these ideas, some of which include the following:

“Overcoming the Fear of Multi-sensory Worship and Teaching” ⁴²

“Creating a Sacred Space for Vintage Worship” ⁴³

“Expecting the Spiritual” ⁴⁴

“Creating Experiential Multi-sensory Worship Gatherings” ⁴⁵

Note the emphasis on “multi-sensory”, “sacred space”, and “vintage worship”. What is this all about and where is this headed?

Ancient Future Talent

Dr. Robert “Bob” Webber is recognized by pastors, denominational leaders, scholars and lay people as one of the foremost authorities on worship renewal. He regularly conducts workshops for almost every major denomination in North America through the Institute of Worship Studies which he founded in 1995.

Prior to his appointment to his present position at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dr. Webber taught at Wheaton College for 32 years as Professor of Theology. He has authored over 40 books and is also a regular contributor to numerous magazines and newspapers including *Worship Leader*.⁴⁶

I was first introduced to Dr. Webber and his views when I read an article he had written for *Worship Leader* titled “Wanted: Ancient Future Talent”. Under a subheading labeled “The Call for Ancient-Future Worship Talent” Webber wrote:

I am personally most gratified to see the shift toward a recovery of the ancient. While many good choruses have been produced over the past forty years, the rejection of the sources of hymnody and worship by the contemporary church has resulted in a faith that is an inch deep.⁴⁷

In this article, Dr. Webber stated that “the Spirit is working a new thing in the church” and an “ancient-future worship is being born.” He listed a number of things that he believed were necessary for “talented workers” to become a successful part of this new movement. Some of these are:

- Rediscovering how God acts through the sacred signs of water, bread and wine, oil and laying on of hands.
- Rediscovering the central nature of the table of the Lord in the Lord’s Supper, breaking of bread, communion and Eucharist.
- Rediscovering how congregational spirituality is formed through the Christian celebration of time in Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost.

While I agree with Dr. Webber it would be beneficial to reintroduce the great hymns written in the past by anointed men and women of God that expound sound biblical doctrine, it appears that is not all that he meant by returning to “the ancient.” In fact his list of things to do in his call for “ancient-future worship talent” mentions a number of terms and ideas that cannot be found in the Bible.

For example, when I hear the expression “sacred signs of bread and wine” or “Lent” as a means of “rediscovering congregational spirituality,” while these ideas may be ancient, I wonder where the ideas originate.

Further, when I hear about “rediscovering the central nature of the table of the Lord in the Lord’s supper, breaking of bread, communion and Eucharist” I am reminded about the “new evangelization” program presently underway initiated by Pope John Paul II when he called for a “missionary vision” centered on “a rekindling of amazement focused on the Eucharist.”

Ancient Future Faith

One of the common beliefs circulating amongst the supporters of the Emergent Church is a concept called “Vintage Christianity”. According to this view, experiences effective in attracting Christians to come to church in the past should be reintroduced today in order to attract the postmodern generation who are hungry for experience.

Dan Kimball, author of *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generation*, is one of the key proponents of this idea. He firmly believes that worship must play an important role to attract post-moderns into Christianity. In a section of his book subtitled “Truly worshipping in a worship gathering,” he writes:

We should be returning to a no-holds-barred approach to worship and teaching so that when we gather, there is no doubt we are in the presence of God. I believe that both believers and unbelievers in our emerging culture are hungry for this. It isn't about clever apologetics or careful exegetical and expository preaching or great worship bands. ... Emerging generations are hungry to experience God in worship.⁴⁸

Rob Redman, author of *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church* agrees with Kimball. He has noted that churches that provide a liturgical vintage form of worship are attracting the postmodern generation. He writes:

Liturgical churches, particularly Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox, report increasing interest in traditional liturgical worship among young adults.⁴⁹

Redman notes that as the result of this renewed interest in liturgical worship, a “worship awakening” is now underway and Protestant worship services are beginning to incorporate liturgical worship practices. He states:

A common approach to the worship awakening among Protestant churches is to create a blended service combining older and newer liturgical elements and musical styles.⁵⁰

Julie Sevig, author of an article titled “Ancient New” explains how worship and other activities that stimulate the senses are attracting the postmodern generation:

Post-moderns prefer to encounter Christ by using all their senses. That's part of the appeal of classical liturgical or contemplative worship: the incense and candles, making the sign of the cross, the taste and smell of the bread and wine, touching icons and being anointed with oil. In *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Zondervan, 1999), Leonard Sweet says: "Post-moderns want a God they can feel, taste, touch, hear and smell—a full sensory immersion in the divine."⁵¹

In the same article, an interview with Karen Ward further describes the style of worship that is emerging in the Emerging Church:

Evangelicals are using traditions from all liturgical churches from Orthodox to Lutheran to Catholic. Though they have limited experience using their new-found

symbols, rituals and traditions, they're infusing them with vitality and spirit and life, which is reaching people.⁵²

"U2-charist"

Based on the documentation from the three previous sources, it is apparent that experiential worship is an important means of attracting people who are looking for experience.

As Julie Sevig stated, people "are being reached" by sensual stimulation. However, a legitimate question needs to be asked: if they are being reached, what are they being reached for? Do they have a clear understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures? Or have they been introduced to a form of Christianity that is more experience-based than Bible-based?

Further, it is apparent that a "no-holds-barred" approach is definitely a real part of this "reaching" process." The following article describes a "no-holds-barred" approach that is presently underway in emergent meetings as a means of reaching people:

It may not qualify as a mini-Reformation, but a Communion service driven by the music of singer Bono and his U2 bandmates is catching on at Episcopal churches across the country. The U2 Eucharist is not some kind of youth service held in the church basement but is a traditional Episcopal liturgy that uses U2's best-selling songs as hymns.

"It makes you, like, warm inside," says Bridgette Roberts, 15, who is a Roman Catholic and attended a recent U2 Eucharist at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. "Usually at church, you love Jesus and everything. But this way you can express how you feel." Says her friend, Natalie Williams, 17: "I love Bono, and you can rock out to the music. But in church, you hear it in a different way. It's like new."⁵³

According to the article, the Rev. Paige Blair, an Episcopal priest in York Harbor, Maine, came up with the idea for the "U2-charist." She held the first service at her church on July 31, 2005, displaying U2's lyrics on a screen by the altar. Since then she informally has consulted with about 150 churches that have had U2 Eucharists (or are planning to) in fifteen states and seven countries.⁵⁴

Eucharistic Evangelization

Interest in Rev. Blair's innovation to celebrate communion is catching on. Blair's church is starting what it calls a "U2-charist team" to take U2-charist evangelism on the road.⁵⁵

I find this example of Vintage Christianity very interesting in light of the New Evangelization Program. I am fascinated to find out that the Emerging Church vintage worship campaign is now sending out "evangelists" who are introducing post-moderns that are hungry for experience to the Eucharistic experience.

I would expect there will soon be many non-Catholics who will be introduced to this encounter through "U2-charist" evangelism. Many will believe this experience is new, when actually it is quite old. It is what the Roman Catholic Church has always taught that one must believe in order to be a Christian.

The Impact of Imagery

The Bible teaches that faith comes by hearing the Word of God.⁵⁶ Not so in the Emerging Church. Faith comes by seeing images, touching icons, smelling incense and hearing liturgical sounds. Post-moderns require such stimulation to experience God. Images of Jesus hanging on the cross are very common. So are icons of Mary and baby Jesus.

The January-February issue of *Worship Leader Magazine* provides interesting background information with regard to the significance of imagery to our present generation. In an article written by editor Chuck Fromm titled “The Impact of Image” the following is stated:

We are now living in a “post Passion of the Christ world”. The extraordinary success of Mel Gibson’s landmark film, and the controversy that surrounded it, underscores in no uncertain terms how imagery shapes our cultural consciousness. The implications for the church and its service of worship have been both profound and ambiguous.⁵⁷

Fromm’s assessment about Mel Gibson’s portrayal of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by a Hollywood producer capable of using vivid imagery is very true. While this imagery may have been effective, there is an important question that needs to be asked: is it biblical? What chapter and verse can we find to support the use of imagery as an evangelistic tool?

When I think of imagery and the Bible, I am reminded of what the Bible says about avoiding it. For example:

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude form or image on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female... And lest thou ... shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them.⁵⁸

However, the present trend that seems to be on the upswing as part of the Emerging Church movement, promotes the view that “seeing” Jesus hanging on the cross is an effective tool for evangelism. While not supported by Scripture, this and other ideas can be found in “church tradition”. As Chuck Fromm commented in his article:

In many ways, the Church is seeking a way back to its oldest and most sacred traditions: those in which all the senses are fully engaged in the act of worship from incense and bells to icons and vestments.⁵⁹

Apparently justification for the return of these “ancient traditional practices” is based on the idea that our present generation is looking for such experiences. As Fromm states:

The power of the preached word is being augmented, and occasionally outpaced, by the impact of the visual. The primacy of music as an essential expression of worship is being challenged by congregations hungry for more direct means of engagement.⁶⁰

Multi-Sensory Worship

Stimulating images that provide spiritual experiences are becoming more and more popular as part of the Emerging Church promotion. While many are bewildered why their churches are

darkening their sanctuaries and setting up prayer stations with candles, incense and icons, the promoters of the Emerging Church movement, say they know exactly what they are doing.

Often, Christians who have been attending church all their lives find the changes their pastors are implementing disconcerting. They see the trend away from Bible teaching to multi-sensory stimulation. Pastor Dan Kimball describes a conversation he had with an older gentleman who had expressed his concerns about the implementation of an emerging style of mystical worship:

“Dan, why did you use incense? I am not sure I like walking over to those prayer stations with all those props; can’t we just pray from our seats? Why aren’t you preaching the Bible? I wasn’t too comfortable when you had those times of silence, and it’s a little to dark in here for me.”⁶¹

The comment by this older gentleman (in his seventies) is typical of the comments I am hearing from many as I travel and speak at conferences around North America. Comments like this not only come from the elderly. I hear people saying the same things throughout the whole age spectrum. Those who have been attending churches where pastors taught God’s Word are becoming very concerned when they see multi-sensory mystical worship replace what they had been used to.

Nevertheless, Dan Kimball and many others are convinced they are on the right path based on their view that “emerging generations” desire a multi-sensory worship experience. For example, in a chapter of Kimball’s book titled “Creating a Sacred Space for Vintage Worship” Kimball states:

So aesthetics is not an end in itself. But in our culture, which is becoming more multi-sensory and respectful of God, we have a responsibility to pay attention to the design of space where we assemble regularly. In the emerging culture, darkness represents spirituality. We see this in Buddhist temples, as well as Catholic and Orthodox churches. Darkness communicates that something serious is happening.⁶²

A few pages later in his book Kimball endorses the practice of the “lectio divina” that was instituted by the desert monks and supported and promoted by Pope Benedict XVI and the Roman Catholic Church.⁶³ Further Kimball explains how he implemented a “prayer labyrinth,” an idea borrowed from the Middle Ages. As he states: “Christians of that time would slowly walk the labyrinth as an aid to contemplative prayer and reflection.”⁶⁴ (In another section of this paper we will deal with contemplative prayer.)

Following these statements, Dan Kimball writes: “How ironic that returning to a raw and ancient form of worship is now seen as new and even cutting edge. We are simply going back to a vintage form of worship which has been around for as long as the church has been in existence.”⁶⁵

Part Five **Church Fathers and the Pathway to Rome**

We know from the Scriptures that Satan's plan is to deceive the whole world. His objective is to blind the minds of the unbelieving and to recruit those who have believed to assist him in his agenda to deceive the world in the name of the Savior.

Do you recall what Paul prophesied would happen to the early Christian church? This is what he said:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.⁶⁶

A brief overview of church history reveals Paul's prophetic warning was accurate. He said it would happen and then it happened. Numerous church leaders emerged during the first to the third centuries. The foundational principles of the Scriptures were ignored and many followed the experiential teachings of men who claimed they had discovered new and innovative methods to get in touch with God.

The reason why this happened is simple. We know that God's Word is light. When we begin to replace the Word of God by the words of man which are considered to bring enlightenment, we have a perfect formula for returning to darkness. The mystics added ideas to Christianity that cannot be found in the Bible—a recipe for spiritual disaster.

Jude also warned about the coming apostasy in the early church. He said certain men had already crept in unawares because error was not being corrected.⁶⁷

Now, let's bring this up to date. The latest church growth wave today is the Emerging Church. As we are going to see, many of the leaders of the Emerging Church are suggesting it is important to study the ideas and beliefs of the church leaders that emerged in the first to third centuries after Christ. They say that if pastors and church leaders reintroduce these teachings from the past we will have spiritual transformation and successful churches in the 21st century.

But, just a minute! If the church that emerged from the New Testament Church was based on ideas and beliefs that were foreign to the Scriptures, there is reason to be concerned. Doctrine must be based on what God has said in His Word. When dogma takes the place of doctrine, Scripture has been ignored and many will be led astray.

Rather than reviving the teachings of the desert monks and early "church fathers" who reinterpreted the Bible and came up with their own mystical views, I believe we should be aware of such practices and avoid them. While proponents of the Emerging Church believe they are getting closer to God by following the mystics, they are not paying attention to the Word of God.

The last days will be characterized by doctrines of demons. There will be many ways to lead sincere Bible-believing Christians astray.⁶⁸ The present day Emerging Church movement has that potential.

Rethinking Evangelicalism

Robert Webber is calling for a “New Evangelicalism” which is based on what he calls “Ancient-Future Faith.” He and others are convinced that Christianity needs to be revised or remodeled for the 21st century. But in order to go ahead, we must go back to the mystics and learn from them, they say.

What does it actually mean to be an evangelical? When I was a new believer twenty-five years ago it meant to be a promoter of the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. Not so today. The term *evangelical* encompasses a wide variety of beliefs promoted by people who call themselves Christians.

A good way to provide an example of what I am saying is to quote Dr. Robert Webber from his book *Ancient Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. While Webber claims the Bible is an important book for the Christian faith, he suggests that the Bible needs to be supplemented by various other books written by spiritual mystics from the past. He writes:

The primary source of spiritual reading is the Bible. But we now recognize that in our love of Scripture we dare not avoid the mystics and the activists. Devotion to the great devotional literature of the church is essential. More and more people are turning to the great work of the mystics. Richard Foster has called us to recover Augustine’s *Confessions*, Bernard of Clairvaux’s *The Steps of Humility...*
⁶⁹

Webber’s list of books that provide food for the soul authored by mystics goes on and on: Thomas a Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton and numerous others. Then Webber makes this following statement: “To immerse ourselves in these great works is to allow our vision to be expanded by a great treasure of spirituality.”⁷⁰

Why would Webber, a Baptist, be so enamored by the writings of Roman Catholic mystics? While reading the books written by Catholic mystics may allow one’s “vision to be expanded,” what is meant by the phrase “a great treasure of spirituality”?

I think I know the answer to this question. This “great treasure of spirituality” will not be based on biblical Christianity. Instead the reader will be introduced to ideas and beliefs that have provided the seeds for Roman Catholic dogmas that have no scriptural basis.

Webber actually admonishes his readers to embrace the Catholic mystics. He writes:

The value of all these books as well as many not mentioned are dispensable to spirituality. Those who neglect these works do so to their harm, and those who read them do so for their inspiration and spiritual growth.⁷¹

However, the real reason Webber would like evangelicals to read Catholic mystics and become part of the “new evangelicalism” is for the sake of unity. He writes:

A goal for evangelicals in the postmodern world is to accept diversity as historical reality, but to seek unity in the midst of it. This perspective will allow us to see Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches as various forms of the one true

church—all based on apostolic teachings and authority, finding common ground in the faith expressed by classical Christianity.⁷²

Old is “New” Again

Dr. Dale Dirksen is Associate Professor of Worship and Church Ministry at Briercrest Seminary located at Caronport, Saskatchewan. In the Fall 2005 issue of the Briercrest *Passport Magazine*, Dr. Dirksen wrote an article titled “Old is ‘New’ Again: The Emergent Church.” Under the subheading “The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same” Dr. Dirksen wrote:

Many church leaders are talking about some significant changes in culture. Some call this “postmodern” (that is after the modern era). Others call it emergent. Emergent people are questioning many of the things the modern world thought to be certain, like the power of human reason as a way to find truth and the infallibility of technology. They have a lot of interest in ancient ideas. They are hungry for mystery and searching for God.⁷³

Dr. Dirksen, like Dr. Webber, agrees that the Bible should be our foundation for truth. However, Dr. Dirksen points out that in order to be relevant to our present generation we need to be open to change if we are going to be effective evangelists in the postmodern age:

Cultural change requires careful and thoughtful response. The Church has changed a lot in almost 2,000 years, but it has also tried to live and serve in light of the unchanging truth of Scripture. It is often in change that we refine, or even rediscover the major things and set aside the ones that do not matter so much. We have a chance to do that now.⁷⁴

According to Dirksen, “refining” sometimes requires “rediscovering” if we are going to be relevant in reaching this present generation. As he states:

If we are going to get serious about following the command of Christ to make disciples, it will mean adopting a new kind of attitude, a new sense of mission. How can we learn about this new culture in which we find ourselves? What is its language? What are its practices? What are its gods? As we find these things out, we will be more likely to act like many missionaries before us, setting aside our own language, practice and cultures so that we can reach out.⁷⁵

In order to “reach out” Dr. Dirksen provides his readers with insights that can be used for evangelizing the postmodern generation. He offers a suggestion with regard to understanding the emergent language and culture:

(The emergent language) is more than a verbal language. It involves pictures, symbols, actions, even smells. To speak “emergent” the church will need to use more than words. The good news is that we can find this emergent language in our own faith. But we will have to look back a long way.⁷⁶

What does Dr. Dirksen mean by the phrase “looking back a long way?” His article clarifies exactly what is meant so there is no need to speculate. He wrote:

To connect with emergent people, however, we will need to look back much further than the twentieth century or even the Reformation. Ancient practices that seem to

have spiritual significance for emergent people are often found in the third century, the turn of the first millennium, or the drama of worship in the Middle Ages. Learning about the depth of practice in the church year of the mystery of an ancient Eucharistic prayer is learning about the work of the Holy Spirit in His Church.⁷⁷

How Safe Is It?

As we have been able to document, going back to the past to find experiences that will be attractive to the postmodern generation is one of the goals of the Emerging Church movement. However, a serious question should be asked at this point. Why would one only go back to the Middle Ages, the turn of the first millennium or the third century? Wouldn't this open the door for some devious doctrines that may have crept into the church? Why wouldn't one just stay with the Scriptures in order to be safe?

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote to Timothy and said:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.⁷⁸

However, it seems that such definitive advice that comes from these words written by Paul is often overlooked, especially by those who are convinced that great spiritual insight can be gleaned from church fathers and mystics.

Proponents of vintage Christianity and ancient-future faith such as Dr. Webber have an apologetic for those who express their concerns about leaving the confines of scriptural doctrine for post New Testament extra-biblical revelation. In a chapter of *Ancient Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* that is titled "Recovering Our Historical Connection," he wrote:

For example, I once believed that the church became apostate at the close of the first century and hadn't emerged again until the Reformation. I jokingly say to my students, "We Protestants act as though Pentecost occurred October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther tacked his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenburg church." This attitude results in a negative view of early church fathers and Christianity prior to the Reformation. The fact is that God's church has existed from *the Pentecost described in Acts*. We belong to the whole church and need, for our own spiritual health, to affirm every part of it.⁷⁹

Dr. Webber recognizes there are those who would fit into the category of Protestant (other than himself of course) who are suspicious about taking instruction from the church fathers, especially when the church fathers are the fathers of the Roman Catholic Church. In order to answer this concern, Dr. Webber writes:

Because evangelicals fear that a respect for early church fathers will turn them into Roman Catholics, a distinction needs to be made between *catholic* and *Roman Catholic*. The early church fathers are catholic in the sense that they defined the classical Christian tradition for the whole church. This is a tradition, as I have been presenting, common to every branch of church. Roman Catholicism, as such, is a tradition that has added to a common tradition. I believe in the common tradition and share that tradition with my Catholic brothers and sisters. But I do not believe in

some of the added traditions of the Romanization of the church in the medieval era.
80

This statement may convince some there is no danger in studying the Roman Catholic church fathers from the first to third centuries who promoted many ideas without a biblical basis. However, before you are convinced, consider the next statement that Dr. Webber makes to justify his position:

The early Fathers can bring us back to what is common and help us get behind our various traditions, not in a sense that we deny our own tradition, but that we give priority to the common teaching of the church. Here is where our unity lies. To summarize, the words *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic* point to the oneness of the church, as a matter of faith. Christians do not believe something *about* oneness of the church; they believe *in* the oneness of the church. Consequently, evangelicals need to go beyond talk about the unity of the church to experience it through an attitude of acceptance of the whole church and an entrance into dialogue with the Orthodox, Catholic and other Protestant bodies. This is already happening in the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” consultation, in the evangelical-Orthodox dialogue, in scholarly societies as the Society of Biblical Literature, and in local ecumenical settings in which evangelicals are involved.⁸¹

A Catholic Perspective of the Importance of the Church Fathers

Dr. Webber promotes the view that studying the Roman Catholic Church fathers is as safe as drinking mother’s milk. He and the Emerging Church proponents who insist there are so many spiritual insights to gain seem to argue convincingly that every Christian would benefit by expanding their spiritual horizons and adding the knowledge expounded by the church fathers.

This of course would be true if the church fathers point us to God’s Word. But what if there are insights that are not scriptural? The unsuspecting could actually be led away from the Scriptures and biblical doctrine towards the doctrines made up by man and even inspired by demons. If it can be shown that some of the ideas of the Church Fathers lead away from biblical Christianity to redefined Christianity that gives more authority to man than God’s Word, shouldn’t we be suspicious?

With this in mind, it would be helpful to check out what Roman Catholics say about the Roman Catholic Church fathers. In order to do so, I am going to quote from a lecture posted on the Internet by the International Catholic University titled “Importance of Studying the Church Fathers.”⁸² In a statement explaining who the church fathers are, we read:

Who are the Fathers of the Church? Traditionally there have been four criteria offered as necessary qualifications to be considered a Father of the Church. First is chronology or antiquity. The Apostolic era is usually considered to begin with writers after the compilation of the Canon of the New Testament. The Apostolic Fathers include Saint Clement of Rome, who lived in the first century, died perhaps in the 80s or 90s; Saint Polycarp, the great Bishop of Smyrna martyred in his 80th year; and Saint Ignatius of Antioch, martyred in Rome in 110. The Apostolic Fathers would have personally known the Apostles and the Evangelists, the Disciples of our Lord. The era of the Church Fathers normally is considered to end in the East with Saint John of Damascene, who died in 749; and in the West with St. Isidore of

Seville who died in 636. The first criteria, then, for being a Church Father is to have lived in antiquity, from the first to the seventh or eighth century.⁸³

With this as a background for understanding the Roman Catholic view regarding who can be a church father, let's see what the Roman Catholics teach regarding the authority these church fathers supposedly have:

But why do we study them? The Holy Father has given us the basic reasons. They are the framers of the structure of the Church built upon Christ Jesus as the cornerstone and the Apostles as the foundation. Specifically, they are the privileged witnesses to traditions. Founders, whether they be founders of institutions or founders of religious societies, always have a privileged position. They are the ones who bring together a sense of mission, a sense of direction. Analogously in the growth and in the development of the Church, the teachings of the Fathers have a very special place. They were the closest to the sources; the early Fathers, referred to as Apostolic Fathers, personally knew the Apostles and the Disciples. They had access to the purity of the sources of the living tradition, the very teachings of those closest to Christ, and they were the ones that developed the first structures of the Church.⁸⁴

Finally, one more statement from this lecture, that should reveal why embracing the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church fathers almost always leads to conversion to the Roman Catholic Church:

The Church Fathers are the guarantors of an authentic Catholic Tradition. The teaching of the Church Fathers was central to the documents coming forth from the Second Vatican Council, and there are many references in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to the Church Fathers. Many great Christian men and women have found their way either back to, or into, the Catholic Church through meditating and reflecting upon the writings of the Church Fathers. John Henry Cardinal Newman, a great nineteenth century English Cardinal who in his younger years was a member of the Church of England, fell in love with the writings and thought and spirit of the Church Fathers. And in his *Apologia pro vita sua*, he points out that he saw in them the true Church, the universal Church, the Catholic Church, and they became very instrumental in his acceptance and embrace of the Roman Catholic Church.⁸⁵

Journeys Home

John Henry Cardinal Newman converted to the Roman Catholic Church in the 19th century after reflecting on the writings of the Roman Catholic Church fathers. This same story can be repeated thousands and thousands of times now that we are in the 21st century.

Journeys Home: The Journeys of Protestant Clergy and Laity Coming Home to the Catholic Church and the Coming Home Network International, A Lay Ministry Committed to Helping Them, edited by Marcus C. Grodi is a book that documents many of these conversions. In the introduction of the book we read the following:

Many of these men and women came from Protestant faiths that viewed the Catholic Church as the “Whore of Babylon,” and the pope as the “antichrist.” From an early age they had been taught all kinds of things about Catholics and their beliefs, sometimes horrifying, repulsive things, that made them wonder whether Catholics

could be saved. Yet in each case, and in uniquely different ways, the Holy Spirit opened their hearts to realize that much of what they had been taught about the Catholic Church was never true.⁸⁶

Sharon M. Mann, in a section of *Journeys Home* titled “Still on the Journey” provides personal testimony as one of the many who have made the journey home to Rome. She testified that the church fathers played an important role to start her on her journey to Roman Catholicism. In her own words:

I started reading the early Church Fathers and realized that whatever they believed, they surely were not Protestant. Catholic themes peppered the landscape of Church history. I couldn't deny it—nor could I accept it. Surely they were misguided! The Church was floundering in the first centuries and tons of crazy ideas were floating around—so I thought! When I began reading St. Augustine, however, I was stunned how Catholic he was.⁸⁷

Like many others who have read the writings of Augustine and other Roman Catholic church fathers, something happened to cause Sharon to want to know more about the Sacrament of the Eucharist. She went to a chapel where Eucharistic adoration was underway, and like many others she had an experience that changed her life. This is how Sharon described her encounter:

Finally, Saturday night, at the Eucharistic adoration, I saw a thousand people (plus) kneeling on a hard, concrete floor giving adoration to the Sacrament. I found tears streaming down my face. I knelt, too, not knowing if this was real or whether the people were just crazy! But every time the Sacrament came near me, my throat tightened and I couldn't swallow. I was being torn apart by my convictions. If the Lord was truly passing by, then I wanted to adore and worship Him, but if He wasn't, I was afraid to be idolatrous. The weekend left a very powerful imprint on my heart, and I found myself running out of good arguments to stay Protestant. My heart was longing to be Catholic and be restored to unity with all Christendom.⁸⁸

Sharon's testimony shows there is a path leading to Roman Catholic conversion when one begins to consider the writings of the Roman Catholic church fathers. The Emerging Church, based upon a foundation that ancient-future faith is the answer to reaching the postmodern generation, has the potential to open this door.

Part Six
When the West Returns to the East:
Christianity and New Age Practices

Time has a way of bringing about change. With regard to major shifts in worldviews, a gradual indoctrination that takes place over time seems to be an effective way to bring about major change in the long run. For those of us who have lived on this planet for a half a century or more, the changes we've experienced are phenomenal. When we think back we wonder how our world could have changed so much without many noticing.

I became a Christian in the late '70s. For me, it was like a light coming on in a dark room. I could see reality for the first time. As an unbeliever, I had been locked into a world of materialism, evolutionism and secularism. When the grace of God drew me to the Word of God, I experienced an awakening. From the moment I was converted I was able to see God's plan to save mankind in contrast with Satan's plan to deceive the world.

In the early '80s, I became aware of a major shift in thinking that was sweeping the Western world. Religious pagan practices of the past, once relegated to a world of darkness, were now being embraced as the ways and means of ushering in an age of enlightenment. Instead of physics, it was metaphysics. Rather than believing in God, people were following men who said they were gods. Instead of worshipping the one true God who created everything, they were worshipping everything that the Creator had made. All was God, and even man could become god. Every method and therapy imaginable imported from Hinduism, Buddhism and every form of Eastern mysticism suddenly was in vogue. The age of enlightenment had arrived, we were told.

So, now that we are well into the third millennium it is interesting to look back. What happened, how did this happen and what might lie ahead? These are questions that I believe can be answered in light of the Scriptures. Reading through the Old Testament, we become aware of a pattern that emerges. In short, when human beings turn away from God, they will worship anything and everything as God, even themselves. Satan has a master plan to lead man away from God.

There are many verses that could be used to help us understand from a biblical perspective why Eastern mysticism is gaining a stronghold worldwide. Pay attention to God's warning to Israel through the prophet Isaiah:

Come house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. For Thou hast abandoned Thy people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with influences from the east. And they are soothsayers like the Philistines. And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners.⁸⁹

The Bible explains how God's chosen people were seduced into darkness by embracing doctrines of demons from the "east" in the past. Is it possible history is in the process of repeating?

A New Age Christianity?

The Scriptures reveal that Satan has many clever plans to seduce mankind. Enticing man to turn away from God and embrace the gods is one of his favorites. While it is expected that unbelievers can easily fall into this trap, what about those who claim to follow Jesus?

I have been following the New Age movement even before the phrase *New Age movement* was coined. In the early '80s it became apparent to me that Eastern religion was being widely promoted in the West as something new. While New Agers were enthusiastically advocating yoga, meditation, crystals, spirit guides and humming mantras as the ways and means to achieve global consciousness and enlightenment, professing Christians that I knew could see Satan's strategy. No Bible-believing Christian would ever fall for such deception!

At least that was the way it was twenty-five years ago. Time has a way of changing things. Today it is not uncommon to hear about churches promoting "Christian yoga" for exercise or "Christian" leaders suggesting that the best way to enhance one's prayer life by getting in tune with God through chanting a mantra. What was once described as New Age and occultic is spiritually acceptable now. What has happened? Has God changed His Word or has yoga become Christian? Is it possible that Christians have been duped by Satan and lulled to sleep?

Anyone who cares to do the research will find that yoga and its connection to Eastern religion remains the same. Linking oneself with the universal energy is still the goal. A Christian can believe that yoga is for health and well being if he or she wants, but the facts have not changed.

The amazing thing to me is how quickly Christianity has been changed in such a short period of time. Why has this happened? Does it have something to do with the Word of God being undermined? It seems to me that Christians have joined hands with the New Age and we now have a New Age Christianity that the Bible has always warned us about.

I am reminded of the heavy statements we find in the Old Testament when the children of Israel rebelled against God. For example, this is what we read in Deuteronomy:

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.⁹⁰

Straying away from God and being led by the gods is an abomination unto God and it will be judged. There is not one verse in the Bible that supports a "New Age Christianity".

Christian Yoga?

"Yes to Yoga: Can a Christian breathe air that has been offered to idols?" This title caught my attention. The source of the article was Christianitytoday.com. The author begins this way:

It's 7:45 p.m. on a weekday and for the first time today, I consciously slow down my breathing. I send the air deep down into my belly, letting it rise and fall like a wave. In ... Out ... Along with a group of 30 people in a darkened exercise studio at a Lifetime Fitness gym near Chicago, I use the unhurried cadences of the air filling and leaving my lungs to lull my muscles and joints into daring postures. My body becomes a mountain. An eagle. A warrior. A pigeon. A downward dog. A cobra.

Finally—my favorite pose that comes at the end of each workout—a corpse, during which I lay down and relax every muscle. ⁹¹

Now, you may be asking the question, why would *Christianity Today* publish an article promoting Eastern religion? Yet, the author of the article claims to be an evangelical born-again Christian. She says yoga draws her closer to Jesus. In her own words:

... let me witness that yoga has never had any negative influence on me, and it doesn't trigger any harmful religious impulses. Just the opposite is true. The three hours a week I spend doing yoga not only make me more flexible, tone my muscles, and relax me. They also draw me closer to Christ. ⁹²

This article promoting yoga from a “Christian” perspective published by *Christianity Today* gives insight into the direction Christianity seems to be headed. This “enlightened Christian” tells us more:

Give me five minutes of yoga, and my mind immediately goes to the metaphor of God's spirit being as omnipresent and as necessary as the air. In the same way that measured breathing is essential to yoga, the Spirit—which in both biblical Greek and Hebrew also means breath—is indispensable to my soul. Breathe in. Breathe out. Holy Spirit in. Anything that's not from God out. Come Holy Spirit. Renew my mind. In. Out. ⁹³

In addition to this, there is more a important thing to point out. Christian yoga practitioners often claim they cannot be deceived, even though they know what yoga is and where it comes from. Again, quoting from the article:

Now, my enthusiasm for yoga doesn't mean I'm in denial about its Hindu roots. I know that hard-core yogis believe that yoga is more than exercise or a relaxation technique. To them, it's a religious ritual. But the Hindu gods don't make it onto my mat. Yoga purists don't lead classes at mainstream American gyms. ⁹⁴

So what would Jesus say? Can a Christian incorporate Hindu spiritual practices in order to get closer to the Jesus of the Bible? I have a strong suspicion the “Hindu gods” have an agenda to introduce unsuspecting yoga practitioners to “another Jesus”.

From the New Age to Christ

Brian Flynn is a Christian author and speaker who is very concerned about how Christianity is being infiltrated by New Age methods and practices. Brian and I participated in a conference in Minneapolis not long ago. Brian has authored a book I highly recommend titled *Running Against the Wind: The Transformation of a New Age Medium and His Warning to the Church*. ⁹⁵

Brian's story is amazing. As the subtitle of his book reflects, he was a former New Age practitioner and promoter. In a search for spiritual enlightenment he embraced many New Age ideas and therapies. By God's grace, he was delivered from the New Age and became a Bible-believing Christian.

However to Brian's amazement, he soon discovered the same doctrines of demons he had escaped were being embraced by many professing Christians. When he tried to warn about what was happening to the body of Christ, he was met with opposition.

Let's look at a portion of Brian's testimony from his book explaining what he encountered as a new believer:

One day I received an e-mail from a West Coast publisher asking if I would be willing to review a book. I accepted the offer and when the book arrived, I started reading *A Time of Departing* by Ray Yungen. The book described a style of praying I had never heard before called *contemplative prayer*. As I continued to read I was struck by similarities between Eastern style of meditation like Transcendental Meditation and this contemplative prayer. The author wrote the book because he believed this style of prayer was infiltrating the church. I initially found that hard to believe and figured it must a West Coast problem and certainly not a nationwide practice with which to be concerned.⁹⁶

So, let's review this scenario. Bryan Flynn, a former New Age proponent, became a born-again Christian. As a born-again Christian, he encountered a warning by another Christian that the New Age techniques he had been delivered from were infiltrating the church. At first he thought that this must be just some fringe group and not all that significant. Later he discovered the reality that "contemplative prayer" was being promoted by "Christians" using the exact New Age methods he had escaped. Quoting again from Flynn's book:

What a shock it was to learn how this style of prayer (contemplative prayer) had become a standard practice in many churches across the nation. But it was even more disturbing that pastoral leadership was welcoming it. Many were actually defending it. I soon began to realize that many pastors had little knowledge of Eastern thought or its practices.⁹⁷

Brian Flynn's comments are accurate. Hindu practices are being embraced in the Christian church as part of what is called the Emerging Church. When concerned watchmen and watchwomen point this out, they are often scoffed at and ridiculed and put down as "divisive."

Contemplative Prayer

The Bible warns us about false teachers that promote doctrines of demons in the last days.⁹⁸ It would seem reasonable then for Christians to be aware.

However, we are living at a time when many believe that Christians cannot be deceived. As we are going to see in a later section, many Christians have abandoned the belief that the return of Jesus Christ is at hand. They are too busy playing a role to build the kingdom of God here on earth through human effort.

Further, it can be shown that many are searching for methods to become more efficient in hearing from God and doing His work without studying His Word. Contemplative prayer is one of these methods.

In order to understand what contemplative prayer is we will look at explanations from those who promote it. This is what Father Thomas Keating wrote:

The root of prayer is interior silence. We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words, but this is only one of its forms... Contemplative prayer is not so much the absence of thoughts as detachment from them. It is the opening of mind and heart, body and emotions—our whole being—to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond words, thoughts and emotions—beyond, in other words, the psychological content of the present moment. We do not deny or repress what is in our consciousness. We simply accept the fact of whatever is there and go beyond it, not by effort, but by letting go of whatever is there.⁹⁹

Here is a statement taken from a Roman Catholic source that will help clarify what contemplative prayer is based on:

Today's revival of practical interest in contemplative prayer is witnessed by a flood of books and articles, lectures, conferences and retreats, and its causes can be traced to factors both within and outside the Church. The Second Vatican Council, for example, gave both religious and lay people a new sense of freedom and a desire for spiritual renewal. Groups like the Cursillo and the Charismatic Movement, and later Centering Prayer and meditation groups following the teaching of John Main have helped introduce large numbers of Christians to a deeper life of prayer. When we add to this the spiritual hunger so characteristic of our modern Western civilization and its deeper acquaintance of Eastern forms of meditation and various depth psychologies, we end up with a setting in which practical questions about Christian mysticism naturally arise.¹⁰⁰

These two previous statements should be alarming. Ideas being promoted by Roman Catholic mystics, and now widely embraced by non-Roman Catholics, sound strangely familiar. Blanking out one's mind to arrive at a meditative state has long been practiced as a means of contacting the divine. While it is common to Eastern religion, it is foreign to the Scriptures. Such practices, as we are going to see, are widely embraced by Emerging Church leaders.

Understanding Contemplative Prayer

What is contemplative prayer? Here is how one promoter defined it:

Contemplative prayer in its simplest form is prayer in which you still your thoughts... This puts you in a better state to be aware of God's presence, and it makes you better able to hear God's voice correcting, guiding and directing you.¹⁰¹

If that definition sounds beneficial to one's spiritual well-being consider another explanation that provides an even clearer understanding:

Its practitioners are trained to focus on an inner symbol that quiets the mind... When practitioners become skilled at this method of meditation, they undergo a deep trance state similar to auto-hypnosis.¹⁰²

Contemplative prayer is making a big comeback. First discovered by monks in the third century who isolated themselves in desert monasteries, you can now find many who are promoting contemplative prayer in a wide spectrum of evangelical churches.

Brian Flynn, in his book *Running With the Wind*, provides interesting background to where the technique came from and how widely it is being accepted today. Quoting from his book:

Perhaps the Desert Fathers either came into contact with someone from the East who shared these practices with them, or maybe they stumbled across it themselves. Whatever its origin, this heretical practice has entered our churches virtually unopposed.

The first form of monasticism was practiced by the *hermit*. (In Greek the word means desert). The first hermit was St. Anthony, a revered Egyptian monk who moved away from society and into the desert around 270 AD (3rd century). Many followed St. Anthony's lifestyle and also became hermits. Nearly 80 years later the first monastery was built. This brought the hermits together under one roof rather than each of them living alone in the desert.¹⁰³

Finding out what occurred in the past helps me to understand the present. The Bible tells us there is nothing new under the sun. Furthermore, this idea that we need to go back to the past and find what "Christian experiences" were effective and then reintroduce them into the present, is the central theme of the Emerging Church.

Thomas Merton

Thomas Merton was a world-renowned Trappist monk and author who lived at the Abbey of Gethsemani near Bradstown, Kentucky from 1941 until he died in 1968. While a Catholic, he was more influenced by other religions than he was by the Bible and Christianity.

Ray Yungen, in his book *Time of Departing*, documents Merton's interest in the "wisdom of all religions." Yungen cites William Shannon's *The Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* in which Merton was once quoted as stating:

I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism and to these great Asian mystical traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own Christian traditions.¹⁰⁴

You do not have to be a Bible scholar to see the error in Merton's theology. Buddhists believe that evolution is god. Hindus believe that anything and everything is god and that even man can be god. What benefit would Christianity gain by embracing Hinduism and Buddhism? Jesus said there is a narrow way that leads to eternal life, and He was that narrow way. What would give a Catholic monk the right to say that Christianity can be revised to embrace pagan heretical teachings that send people to hell?

Further, Merton once said, "I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity... I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can."¹⁰⁵

Thomas Merton has been credited with rediscovering contemplative prayer. If he wanted to become a "good Buddhist" and he saw no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity, shouldn't that be a clue for those who believe contemplative prayer is a modern-day hotline to God? What was Merton's definition of Christianity? It certainly was not a biblical one.

Emerging Church leaders who are promoting contemplative prayer in the church are headed down this road. When the blind lead the blind there is no other choice. If Christians are willing to follow the teachings of Thomas Merton, then they will be further led away from the Scriptures.

In the future you can expect many will fall for methods that introduce experiences in the name of Jesus that initiate the unsuspecting to “another Jesus”. Centering oneself to become more in tune, repeating single words over and over, breathing exercises in order to become more spiritually aware, will be more and more popular. Those who attempt to warn the church of the dangers of contemplative prayer are singled out as divisive and negative.

Richard Foster

Richard Foster is a disciple of Thomas Merton. Foster is probably the most influential and well-known of those considered to be evangelical Christians in support of contemplative prayer. Foster regards Merton as his mentor.¹⁰⁶

Now consider this question: Why would someone who claims to be a Christian, after reading and understanding Merton’s position on Eastern religion, promote his ideas? Worse yet, why is it that when other Christians who have embraced contemplative prayer are informed about this connection, they refuse to listen?

The following statement reveals what Richard Foster believes about his mentor, Thomas Merton:

Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood... His interest in contemplation led him to investigate prayer forms in Eastern religion. Zen masters from Asia regarded him as the preeminent authority on their kind of prayer in the United States.¹⁰⁷

The evidence is overwhelming. The promoters of contemplative prayer enthusiastically connect themselves with Zen masters and Eastern religion.

In the past, when the Israelites turned their backs on the God of the Bible and embraced the gods, the Old Testament prophets pleaded with them to repent and get right with God. Has anything changed? Has God changed His mind? Contemplative prayer, based on the statements of its founders comes from the East and is pagan in origin.

Contemplative Prayer or Terror?

The purpose of contemplative prayer is to become more in tune with God. While not found in the Bible, it is found in the sacred writings of Eastern religions. Men like Merton and Foster have adapted the idea for modern-day Christianity and it is becoming very popular as the ways and means of getting closer to God as part of the Emerging Church.

However, Richard Foster, one of the most well-known promoters of contemplative prayer, claims there is reason to be cautious. Quoting from his book *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*:

I also want to give a word of precaution. In the silent contemplation of God we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm, and there is such a thing as supernatural guidance that is not divine guidance. While the Bible does not give us a lot of information on the nature of the spiritual world, we do know... there are various orders of spiritual beings, and some of them are definitely not in cooperation with God and his way! ... But for now I want to encourage you to learn and practice prayers of protection... “All dark and evil spirits must now leave.”¹⁰⁸

I have searched the Scriptures. You can do the same. I cannot find where we are required to pray a prayer of protection before we pray. The fact that Foster recognizes contemplative prayer can open the door to the fallen spirit world is very revealing. What is this—praying to the God of the Bible but instead contacting demons? Maybe contemplative prayer should be renamed “contemplative terror”.

Even more suspect is the idea that contemplative prayer is only for a select group. Again, read what Richard Foster has to say about this:

At the onset I need to give a word of warning, a little like the warning labels on medicine bottles. Contemplative prayer is not for the novice. I do not say this about other forms of prayer. All are welcome, regardless of proficiency or expertise, to enter freely into adoration and meditation and intercession and a host of other approaches to prayer. But contemplation is different. While we are all precious in the eyes of God, we are all not equally ready to listen to “God’s speech in his wondrous, terrible, gentle, loving, all embracing silence.”¹⁰⁹

Foster promotes a form of prayer that is only for the mature, select, proficient, experts who are “ready to listen” to God. But where is this found in Scripture? It seems to me that Foster and those who follow his teachings should be assigned warning labels.

What is amazing to me is that many today would rather listen to men and the methods they promote rather than Jesus and His Word, which exposes them.

In the next section, we will examine the topic of spiritual transformation and how the Emerging Church leaders are introducing the postmodern generation to the pagan religious practices of the past in the name of Christianity.

Part Seven
Monks, Mystics and the New Reformation:
The Emergence of the Roman Catholic Eucharist

In the previous section, we looked at a current trend underway that is drawing Christians into areas of mysticism based on Eastern religion. While those who are promoting these ideas are convinced they are doing no harm, the dangers of opening the door to this brand of spirituality is paramount. When one traces the origin of these ideas to their roots, one thing becomes apparent: the Bible is not the source.

In this section, in order to provide a broader perspective of how and why a spiritual transformation is happening, we will discuss a few authors and the statements they have made. It will become obvious there is a pattern unfolding.

This emerging transformation is having a huge impact on churches and church leaders. As more and more people are being drawn to contemplative prayer, ancient-future worship, and other mystical practices, many others are asking questions. Why is this happening? Where is this headed? Is it possible we are seeing a return to spiritual practices of the past that eventually lead to a Roman Catholic-Orthodox form of Christianity? In this section, I will attempt to come up with some answers to these questions.

As an introduction I want to quote from an article posted in the *Maryland News* on March 2, 2006 titled “Returning to the rituals: Some evangelicals are exploring high liturgy.” The article begins the following way:

New Hope, a nondenominational church of about 60 members, is one of a small but growing number of evangelical congregations that are beginning to experiment with worship elements more commonly associated with such highly liturgical traditions as Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Anglicanism.¹¹⁰

Matthew Hay Brown, the author of the article notes that this movement is headed in a particular direction. He wrote:

Observers inside and outside the movement have noted a greater evangelical interest in the Eucharist, the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent, and monastic life. Many of the practices can be traced to the early church.¹¹¹

Later in this same article, Brown provides an explanation for why this movement is happening based on insights obtained from Dr. Robert Webber, the author of *Ancient Future Faith* and *Ancient Future Evangelism*. (Webber was quoted from these books previously in this paper.) Brown writes:

Robert. E. Webber saw this coming. He is the president of the Institute for Worship Studies and author of the eight-volume *Complete Library of Christian Worship*, and he surveyed evangelicals about their faith practices in the late 1990’s.

“They didn’t like contemporary worship anymore,” said Webber, a professor of Ministry at Northern Seminary, at Lombard, Illinois. “They were looking for an encounter with God, they were looking for mystery, they were looking for more Eucharist.”

Webber has written several books promoting what he calls “ancient-future worship,” which draws on early church practices for contemporary Christians.¹¹²

The phrase “they were looking for more Eucharist” stands out to me, especially in light of the Roman Catholic New Evangelization program that has an objective to win the world to the Eucharistic Christ.

The Sacred Way

*The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life*¹¹³ is a book authored by Tony Jones and published by Zondervan. In the foreword written by Phyllis Tickle we are given the following background information about Tony Jones and what he represents:

Tony Jones is a leader of, and major force within, what is being called the Emerging Church, or emergent Church or, more simply, the new or re-forming Christianity. For several years as a Protestant youth minister, Jones learned to read carefully and pastor well the hearts and souls of a rising generation of American Protestants who increasingly yearned for the church of the proto-fathers and mothers of the faith; who yearned for the passion and clarity that were the church of the first century; who wanted to go, not home, but to what Robert Webber called “the ancient-future.” Now as a doctoral candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary, Jones spends himself by sifting through the intervening and obfuscating centuries to ferret out those treasures of the early church practices...¹¹⁴

At the beginning of the book Jones describes his spiritual journey that led him into the Emerging Church that is tied together with “those treasures of the early church practices”. Brought up in the Midwestern United States in a church-going family and educated at a conservative evangelical college which was followed up by a seminary education, Jones admits that his Christian worldview left him disillusioned, empty and searching to find a way to connect with God.

A three-month sabbatical from his job allowed Jones to travel to Europe. His journey first took him to England and a prayer center for young people known as the Reading Boiler Room (a location that hosted a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week prayer vigil). He also went to Dublin, Ireland where he met with Fr. Alan McGuckian and the staff at the Jesuit Communication Center, as well as Taizé’, a community of peace, brotherhood, and prayer in southern France.

Jones explains how this physical journey set him on a spiritual journey that revolutionized his thinking and spiritual beliefs:

I voraciously read authors and books that they didn’t assign in seminary: St. John of the Cross, St Theresa of Avila, and *Pilgrim’s Way*. I met with other Protestants, with Roman Catholics, and with Eastern Orthodox Christians. I took a long hike in the Red Mountains of Utah with a shaman. I corresponded by e-mail with people around the world, and I talked with others about prayer over the phone.¹¹⁵

According to Jones, this journey led him out of the darkness into the light. He is more than willing to be an evangelist for his new found spirituality. He writes:

For years I had been told that to be a Christian meant I had to do three things: (1) read the Bible (2) pray, and (3) go to church. But I had come to the realization that

there is something *more*. And indeed there is... For me, there is incredible richness in the spiritual practices of ancient and modern Christian communities from around the world. Incorporating new ways of praying, meditating, reading the Bible etc. have fueled my faith and passion for spirituality in ways I never thought possible, and have without question brought me into a closer relationship with God. ¹¹⁶

So what are some of the “new ways” of praying Jones suggests have brought him into a closer relationship with God? While his book is filled with many examples, I will choose only two. The first is “The Jesus Prayer:”

So, seated comfortably in a dimly lit room with the head bowed, attend to your breathing, and then begin the prayer with your breathing. Breathe in: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God”, breathe out: “have mercy on me a sinner.” Guarding the mind against all distractions, the pray-er focuses during every repetition on the meaning of the words, praying them from the heart and in the heart... In order to keep track of my repetitions, I use a prayer rope. Most are made in monasteries on Mt. Athos in Greece with 100 knots, each knot tied with nine crosses. Every 25 knots is a bead which the Lord’s Prayer can be recited, and at the end I say the Apostles’ Creed.¹¹⁷

Second, Jones describes the process of centering prayer to get closer to God. He introduces centering prayer this way:

Like the Jesus Prayer, Centering Prayer grew out of the reflections and writings of the Desert Fathers... Unlike the Jesus Prayer, a repetitive prayer is not used. The pray-er is encouraged to choose a simple, monosyllabic word, like “love” or “God”. When the mind is distracted, this word is used to bring back the mind into focus on God.¹¹⁸

Tony Jones’ spiritual journey is typical of many others who are headed down the same road. Once grounded in a biblical faith, this faith is left behind for a faith that is rooted in mysticism and then heads towards Roman Catholicism.

It appears that when one starts down this road, discernment with regard to God’s Word is totally ignored. Not only is Tony Jones convinced that the Emerging Church practices based on mysticism provide a way for him to get closer to God, he is convinced these practices are the answer for others as well. In his own words:

I’ve seen lots of people try to convince other people about Jesus and it is rarely successful. Instead, I suggest you try some of these spiritual practices with an open mind. Honestly, what have you got to lose? Even if you count yourself among those convinced of the whole Christian thing, you may remain skeptical about the part where Jesus talks to you...

So if you’re unconvinced, or convinced but still skeptical, or even if you’re a stalwart Christian who has a stale prayer life, the exercises in this book may prove helpful. The funny thing is, I can’t really tell you *why* they’re helpful. I know they work for me, but I am still confounded by their effectiveness... Maybe it’s that there’s something mystical and mysterious about these ancient rites, like we’re tapping into some pre-technological, pre-industrial treasury of the Spirit. ¹¹⁹

Youth Specialties

There is no doubt the “sacred way” that is emerging in the Emerging Church is being led by something and is headed somewhere. As I read more and more articles and books that are promoting ancient-future faith, the pattern becomes more and more apparent.

In the previous section, we looked at the testimony of author Tony Jones and saw how he was drawn into ancient-future faith. Now I want to look at an article written by Mike Perschon titled “Disciplines, Mystics and the Contemplative Life” that was posted at youthspecialties.com.

Mike Perschon lives in Edmonton, Alberta and works as part-time associate pastor of Holyrood Mennonite Church and part-time freelance writer and speaker at camps, schools, and conventions. His article provides another example of how Emerging leaders get introduced to mystical ideas and then pass them on to others.

Here is how Mike Perschon explains how he became an ancient-future supporter and promoter:

I bumped into the classic spiritual disciplines while taking a course called “Dynamics of Christian Life” in my second year of Bible school. One of our textbooks was *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard. The course and textbook only touched on the actual disciplines, but the concept captivated me. The following spring, I found a copy of Richard Foster’s spiritual classic *Celebration of Discipline* in a used bookstore. Opening it and discovering each discipline detailed chapter by chapter, I felt a profound sense of joy and excitement. I’d found a real treasure.¹²⁰

After reading these two Emergent books, one by Dallas Willard and the other by Richard Foster, Perschon continued on with his spiritual journey. Then he was led to other mystical sources that revolutionized his thinking. He wrote:

My church history class introduced me to the word “mystic” in the Christian tradition, and after looking further into the history of Christian mysticism, I found overlap between the disciplines I so wanted to practice and the teachings of these Christian fathers and mothers. I read the writings of Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila. Their words were poetic rather than prosaic—which, for my spirit that had been fed entirely on the modernist apologetics of the “evidence that demands a verdict” late '80s, was like eating a gourmet meal after years of protein shakes. These were people of the faith unlike any I’d encountered—those who had rejected the pleasures of wealth and comfort to live in solitude or monastic communities in deserts, mountains, and forests.¹²¹

Mike Perschon has been active in transferring his newfound spirituality which he gained from monks and Roman Catholic mystics to the young people he teaches at youth retreats and summer camp settings. Describing some of these activities that he promotes, he wrote:

We held “thin place” services in reference to a belief that in prayer, the veil between us and God becomes thinner. Entire nights were devoted to guided meditations, drum circles, and “soul labs.” At soul labs we used the rave culture’s approach of multiple rooms for different music to create a number of prayer stations, where

people could try various approaches to contemplative prayer. During Lent, we all fasted—be it from food, caffeine, coarse language, or video games.¹²²

Many more examples could be presented showing that the pathway from mysticism to Roman Catholicism is becoming more and more evident within the Emerging Church movement. While the Bible is cited as the foundation of the Christian faith, the New Reformation proposes that faith is not complete without the spiritual insights from the desert monks and the mystics. As Robert Webber stated in *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*:

The primary source of spiritual reading is the Bible. But we now recognize that in our love of Scripture we dare not avoid the mystics and the activists. Exposure to the great devotional literature of the church is essential. More and more people are turning to the great work of the mystics.¹²³

More and More Eucharist

The New Reformation presently underway based on spiritual insights gleaned from the mystics is supposed to bring enlightenment. This of course would be true if the participants were being drawn into the light of God's Word. However, based on the evidence that has been presented it seems that the New Reformers are being drawn away from the authority of God's Word towards the authority and practices that have been incorporated by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

In the introduction of this section, Robert Webber was quoted as saying that post-moderns are looking for “an encounter with God—for mystery—they were looking for more Eucharist.”¹²⁴ Based on the current trend where mysticism paves the road to Roman Catholicism, I would suggest that we can expect Webber's prediction to come true and more and more of the postmodern generation seeking after experience will be drawn to the Eucharist.

Webber's insights and prediction may well be based on his own personal experience. There is reason to believe this is the case. For example, I found an interview with Dr. Webber posted on a web site called TheOoze.com where he answered the question “What do you think the North American evangelical church is going to look like twenty-five years from now?” Dr. Webber responded:

Biblical symbols such as baptismal identity and Eucharistic thanksgiving will take on new meaning. The church will be less concerned about having an eschatology and more committed to being an eschatological community.¹²⁵

Over the past several years, I have observed that Dr. Webber's prediction of the future of the church is quite accurate. Many who were once anticipating the soon and imminent return of Jesus are now asleep. Some are saying it appears “the Lord has delayed His coming.” Others are saying, “We have been misled by pastors and teachers who have taught us the Second Coming is a literal return of Jesus to set up His kingdom.” These same people are claiming the “kingdom of God” will be established here on earth through Christians during the Eucharistic Reign of Jesus. (We will deal with this topic in the next section).

After reading Dr. Webber's comment that “biblical symbols such as baptismal identity and Eucharistic thanksgiving will take on new meaning,” I ordered his book *Ancient-Future Evangelism*. This is what I read on page on page 114:

A brief glance at the teaching of the Eucharist from the pre-Nicene period provides insight into the early church's understanding. The Fathers taught that continual spiritual nourishment was provided to believers at this great feast. First it is clear from the writings of Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century that this is no empty symbol. Christ is really present in the bread and wine. He feeds us in the remembrance of His salvation. He feeds us through His presence which is accomplished through prayer.¹²⁶

Experiencing the Eucharist

One might ask the following legitimate question: How do evangelical Protestants like Robert Webber become supporters of Roman Catholic views? In order to find out more about Robert Webber's background and his conversion experience, I discovered Webber's testimony in a book titled *Signs of Wonder: The Phenomenon of Convergence in Modern Liturgical and Charismatic Churches*, published in 1992 by Star Song Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee.

Although the following quote is lengthy, it is important and necessary in order to reveal Webber's change of views that are now such an essential part of the Emerging Church movement. In his own words:

My most memorable encounter with a style of worship different from my own occurred at a weekend retreat more than twenty years ago. I had joined a praise and prayer group while doing graduate work at Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis. The group consisted of Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians and evangelicals who met monthly to read and discuss Scripture, to pray together, to talk, and to just have fun. When the time came for many of us to graduate and move on to new places, we decided to bring our two-year fellowship to an end with a weekend retreat at a local Catholic conference center. It was there we faced an issue we had never even discussed. Could we take Communion together? Could a Catholic priest give the bread and wine to an evangelical? Could an evangelical receive the bread and wine from a Catholic priest?

We were all sitting on the lawn of the monastery near the chapel. The monastery stood on a hill overlooking the rich Missouri farmland, and the smell of the fresh spring grass was in the air. I heard the priest say, "We are going to conclude our retreat with a liturgy in the chapel. You are all of course welcome to come, but I don't know what to say to you about the bread and the wine. As a rule we Catholics only allow other Catholics to receive the body and blood of the Lord. But I have agonized over this separation of our churches, as I know you have."

He paused and continued, "I have decided to break with Catholic tradition and offer you the bread and wine. Why? Because it is my experience that all of you are true Christians devoted to our Lord. But I cannot tell you what to do. You may not feel comfortable receiving the bread and the wine. You must make that decision for yourself. If you don't come to receive, your decision will be respected, and if you do come, you will be welcomed."

Then I lifted my face toward the sun and felt its warmth. Closing my eyes, I allowed my life in the church to pass before me. My prejudices rose up within me: *What are you doing here? You never worshiped in a Catholic setting, let alone received the bread and the wine from a Catholic priest!* Then I considered the spiritually rich

times I'd shared with these people for two years. I heard again my Catholic friends speak of their love for Christ, pray with fervency, and express a real desire to know the Scriptures and live by its authority. Those memories said, "*Go ahead. After all, there is only one Lord, one church, one faith, one baptism, one Holy Communion.*"

In that moment, God broke through the walls I had allowed to separate me from my brothers and sisters of different denominations. I am convinced the prejudices we hold and the walls we build between ourselves and other communities of Christians actually block our experience of God's presence in our lives. Our biases cut us off from the spiritual communion of the fullness of the body of Christ. God dwells in his church, and to reject a part of God's church is to reject him. Furthermore, rejecting a part of God's church keeps us from experiencing what the creed calls "the communion of the Saints." **When God broke down my walls, he brought me into richer fellowship with the body of Christ throughout the world.**¹²⁷

Apparently, Robert Webber's experience was life changing. He goes on to describe how he felt and how his beliefs changed. Once again in his own words:

You might say I was surprised by joy! I found myself ministering to God in praise, and God in turn was ministering to me. I had never had an experience like that in my life. In that Catholic chapel, a new worship experience had bumped up against that old prejudice of mine, and a new attitude was born. **I had taken into myself the experience of another tradition, I had been in dialogue with another worship tradition, and I was surely the richer for it.**¹²⁸

Dr. Robert Webber's experience obviously revolutionized his thinking. His books and articles are a very important part of changing the minds of others who are also playing an influential role in the New Reformation that seems to be leading in a direction towards Rome.

In our next section, we will discuss another area of common ground between Emerging Church leaders and Roman Catholics with regard to what is meant by the kingdom of God here on earth and how it will be established.

Part Eight
The Kingdom of God on Earth:
An Emergent View on the Future of Planet Earth

Not long ago I was challenged by a supporter of the Emerging Church movement to read Brian McLaren's books. Brian McLaren is considered to be one of the most influential and popular of all Emergent authors. Following is a portion of his bio that is posted at his website:

Brian D. McLaren is an author, speaker, pastor, and networker among innovative Christian leaders, thinkers, and activists. He is a frequent guest on television, radio, and news media programs. He has appeared on many broadcasts including Larry King Live, Religion and Ethics Newsweekly, and Nightline. His work has also been covered in *Time* (where he was listed as one of American's twenty-five most influential evangelicals), *Christianity Today*, *Christian Century*, the *Washington Post*, and many other print media.

Born in 1956, he graduated from University of Maryland with degrees in English (BA, summa cum laude, 1978, and MA, in 1981). In 2004, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity Degree from Carey Theological Seminary in Vancouver, BC, Canada. From 1978 to 1986, McLaren taught college English, and in 1982, he helped form Cedar Ridge Community Church, an innovative, nondenominational church in the Baltimore-Washington region (crcc.org). He left higher education in 1986 to serve as the church's founding pastor and served in that capacity until 2006. During that time, Cedar Ridge earned a reputation as a leader among emerging missional congregations.

His books have been or are being translated into many languages, including Korean, Chinese, French, Swedish, Norwegian, and Spanish. He has written for or contributed interviews to many periodicals, including *Leadership*, *Sojourners*, *Worship Leader*, and *Conversations*. Many of his articles are available at www.brianmclaren.net. He is also a musician and songwriter.¹²⁹

I had read two of McLaren's books, but not all of his books. I accepted the challenge and purchased several more of his books. After reading them I stacked them in a pile in the order of date of publication. Here is the list:

- 2000 - *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*
- 2001 - *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*
- 2002 - *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix*
- 2004 - *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a missional + evangelical + post/protestant + liberal/conservative + mystical/poetic + biblical + charismatic/contemplative + fundamentalist/calvanist + Anabaptist/Anglican + Methodist + catholic + green + incarnational + depressed-yet-hopeful + emergent + unfinished CHRISTIAN*
- 2005 - *The Last Word and the Word After That: A Tale of Faith, Doubt, and a New Kind of Christianity*
- 2006 - *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*

According to McLaren, if a person only has time to read one book, then they should read *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*. McLaren has stated: “Everything I’ve written to this point has been a preparation for this book.”¹³⁰

In presenting this paper, I thought the best way to summarize McLaren’s views would be to examine two of Brian McLaren’s books. The first will be *A Generous Orthodoxy* and the second *The Secret Message of Jesus*. As we look at several statements from these two books, it will not only provide a review of what we have learned about the Emerging Church movement, it will provide clear clues regarding where the movement may be headed in the near future.

What is a Generous Orthodoxy?

McLaren’s views as displayed in *Generous Orthodoxy* are consistent with the previous trends I have documented taking place in the Emerging Church. The best way I know to give an overview without doing an entire book report, is to simply present some quotes under various headings. I will choose a few:

One: How to read the Bible

My grandmother had good advice for reading the Bible... Reading the Bible is like eating fish. Enjoy the meat that’s easy to eat first; come back and work on the bones later if you’re still hungry.¹³¹

Two: Being ecumenical and non-critical

The approach that you will find here, which might be called *postcritical*, seeks to find a way to embrace the good in many traditions and historic streams of Christian faith, and to integrate them, yielding a new generous, emergent approach that is greater than the sum of the parts. This approach is both ancient/historical and avant-garde innovative.¹³²

Three: A broad perspective of Christianity

My own upbringing was way out on the end of one of the most conservative branches of one of the most conservative twigs of one of the most conservative branches of one of the most conservative limbs of Christianity, and I am far harder on conservative Protestant Christians who share that heritage than I am on anyone else. I’m sorry. I am consistently oversympathetic 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.¹³³

Four: Introduction to the Roman Catholic Jesus

McLaren describes his spiritual journey in his book by explaining that he progressed from a “conservative Protestant Jesus,”¹³⁴ to a “Pentecostal Charismatic Jesus,”¹³⁵ then to the “Roman Catholic Jesus.”¹³⁶ In the following section he explains the transition from the “Pentecostal Charismatic Jesus” to the “Roman Catholic Jesus”:

The Pentecostal Jesus didn’t have much to say about God’s concern for the whole world, for history, and for creation. It was focused on “the sweet here and now” as well as “the sweet by and by.” But only for individuals who believed—really

believed. Was that all there was? What about justice for non-Christians? Could the Good News of Jesus be even fuller than the “full gospel”? Where were social and historical dimensions to the gospel that went beyond personal health, prosperity, and happiness for believers now in “eternity”? So, for all I gained from meeting the Pentecostal Jesus, I was still unsettled. At about that time, quite by accident, I met a third Jesus.

In graduate school I ended up writing a master’s thesis on novelist Walker Percy. Raised in an intellectual and agnostic home, Percy became a theist, a Christian, and a Roman Catholic, as a young adult, which is a short, bland summary of a long, fascinating story. I loved his novels and essays, and his story and literary work reduced my ignorance and prejudice about Roman Catholicism. Through him I discovered other Roman Catholic writers – twentieth-century writers such as Flannery O’Connor, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Romano Guardini, and Gabriel Marcel, as well as the medieval mystics and others.¹³⁷

Five: Embracing the Roman Catholic Jesus

In this view, Christians are especially aware of how the risen Jesus continues to encounter his followers through public worship, and especially through the Eucharist which is one reason (among many) why the Eucharist is so important to Roman Catholic Christians and their close cousins, Anglican Christians. The Eucharist is a constant celebration of good news, a continual rendezvous with the risen Christ, and through him, with God. That such a rendezvous is possible is amazingly good news for everyone in the church.¹³⁸

Six: The Eastern Orthodox Jesus

So by my mid-20s, I had met the conservative Protestant Jesus, the Pentecostal Jesus, and the Roman Catholic Jesus. And by the grace of God, I didn’t think of them as separate saviors, requiring a lateral conversion to a new denomination each time. Rather, I believed each was a new facet, a new dimension, of that Jesus I had met as a child and rediscovered as a teenager, and that each could enrich my ongoing conversion in my spiritual journey. But I was still unsatisfied, especially because I sensed that if Jesus were truly the Savior, he wasn’t just my personal Savior, but was the Savior of the whole cosmos. The Eastern Orthodox Jesus would lead me into this new territory.¹³⁹

Seven: Spirit led by contemplative methods

I think it’s safe to say that many charismatics believe that the Spirit of Jesus can be experienced *one step beyond the normal*. In other words, Jesus is always present, but one must take a step of faith to experience him...

But it can also become a kind of treadmill where one has to work harder and harder to “work up” an experience of the Spirit. What was once exciting can become fatiguing...

Along the way I read and met Catholic contemplatives who helped me learn a lesson from this fatigue. They believed no less fervently than charismatics that the risen Jesus is present in Spirit and can be experienced. But rather than locating that

experience one step *beyond* the normal, they located it in the very *center* of normalcy. Instead of jumping and shouting, they typically recommended sitting in silence, walking calmly, or in some other way relaxing and quieting one's soul... One Catholic named Brother Lawrence called this realization "practicing God's presence." I began to experiment with this practice early in my spiritual journey.¹⁴⁰

While the previous seven quotes taken from *Generous Orthodoxy*, only represent a small fraction of the ideas promoted by McLaren, these quotes provide us with an overview of where he is coming from and the direction he is headed. As a spokesperson and a leader of the Emerging Church, his emergent theology demonstrates how generous his "generous orthodoxy" really is.

When God's Word is reduced to a place of minimal importance and man's word elevated to the highest authority, there are certain things that can be predicted. No longer will Christianity be based on God's Word. Faith will have been hijacked and the biblical Jesus will have been abandoned for another Jesus. This brand of Christianity is becoming more and more acceptable.

In addition to this overview of McLaren's views of an emergent Christianity, there is another area that needs to be discussed. This deals with his view on where Christianity is headed in the future.

A Generous Orthodoxy and the Kingdom of God

Before leaving McLaren's *Generous Orthodoxy* and looking at *The Secret Message of Jesus*, there is one more area we must cover. This deals with the Emerging Church's view on eschatology—the consideration of the facts pertaining to "last things" including the return of Christ, the Great Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom as well as future judgments of both the just and the unjust.

In a chapter titled "Why I am Green," McLaren lays the foundation for his view of the future, and a view that many other emergent leaders support. Under the subheading "The eschatology of abandonment is being succeeded by an engaging gospel of the kingdom," he writes:

Evangelical-dispensational "left-behind" eschatology (the doctrine of last things or end times that expects the world to be destroyed in just over seven years or one thousand and seven years, depending on the fine print) makes perfect sense in the modern world.¹⁴¹

Ridiculing the teaching of the Rapture and the one thousand year millennial rule of Jesus Christ, McLaren continues:

Understandably, Christians in the power centers of modernity (England in the 1800's, the United States in the 1900's) saw nothing ahead in the secular story of industrial modernity... nothing but spiritual decline and global destruction. Their only hope? A skyhook Second Coming, wrapping up the whole of creation like an empty candy wrapper and throwing it in a cosmic dumpster so God can finally bring our souls to heaven. There is virtually no continuity between this creation and the new heavenly creation in this model; this creation is erased like a mistake, discarded like a non-recyclable milk carton. Why care for creation? Why get sentimental about a container that's served its purpose and is about to be discarded into the cosmic trash compactor of nothingness?¹⁴²

It should be apparent by reading this previous statement by McLaren that he does not read the Scriptures with an apocalyptic view in mind. In fact, he claims that those who would support such a view hold on to “pop-Evangelical eschatology” and that they have made a serious mistake.

This pop-Evangelical eschatology made an understandable but serious mistake: it wrongly assumed that modernity was all there was or ever would be, while it rightly assessed how hopeless the future would be if modernity-without-end was indeed upon us. Just as early Christians could not imagine the gospel outlasting the Roman Empire, nineteenth and twentieth century Evangelicals couldn't imagine the gospel outlasting modernity, the empire of Scientism, consumerism and individualism.¹⁴³

Then redefining the meaning of many verses found in the Old Testament in order to support his view that the kingdom of God will be established here on earth sometime in the future by human effort, McLaren writes:

For pop-Evangelical eschatology to proliferate, it had to ignore or, better reinterpret much written by the Old Testament prophets. Prophetic visions of reconciliation and shalom *within* history (metaphorically conveyed via lions and lambs, children and serpents, swords and plowshares, spears and pruning hooks) had to be pushed *beyond* history, either into a spiritual heaven or a millennial middle ground—a post-historic time zone between history and eternity, so to speak. They also had to marginalize Jesus with all his talk of the kingdom of God coming on earth among us now, and being accessible today.¹⁴⁴

This last sentence is the heart and core of McLaren's book *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything* which we will examine later in this section. For now, in case you were not aware, this concept that the kingdom of God can and will be established here on earth, is the very foundation of Rick Warren's Purpose Driven church growth model.

Purpose Driven Ecumenism

I trust by now that you are seeing a number of paths that facilitate ecumenical unity with Rome. At this point I want to look at another potential ecumenical bridge. What if Protestant evangelicals who have believed in the gospel according to the Scriptures, became sidetracked into promoting a humanistic “social gospel” that has the potential of leading them astray? Could this be another possible path to Rome?

This is the reason why I am concerned about Rick Warren's Purpose-Driven PEACE plan designed to win the world to Christ. Based on facts I have read, Rick Warren's ambitious program to reach the world may sound good and appear to be biblically-based, but there are some concerns. In fact there are warning signs that indicate the Purpose-Driven PEACE plan may be just another path that leads to a much bigger plan that is already in place.

First, to get some background on Warren's program to help build the kingdom of God here on earth, I want to quote an article written by Mark Kelly from the *Biblical Recorder* titled “Rick Warren launches global initiative”.

Thousands of churches around the world will be setting out to eradicate five “giant problems” that oppress billions of people, Rick Warren told a crowd of 30,000 celebrating Saddleback Community Church's 25th anniversary April 17 at Angel

Stadium in Anaheim, California. “Billions of people suffer each day from problems so big no government can solve them,” said Warren, Saddleback’s pastor. “The only thing big enough to solve the problems of spiritual emptiness, selfish leadership, poverty, disease and ignorance is the network of millions of churches around the world.”¹⁴⁵

Or for an additional perspective, we can quote from Dan Wooding’s article titled “Rick Warren Hits Home Run with Announcement of Global Peace Plan to Battle Giants of Our World.” Wooding stated:

Rick Warren, author of the best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life* and founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, hit a home run with a dramatic announcement on Sunday, April 17th, before 30,000 members and attendees at the church 25th anniversary celebration in Angel Stadium, home of the Angels baseball team. Warren unveiled the church’s commitment to a new reformation in Christianity and vision for a worldwide spiritual awakening in the 21st Century through the PEACE Plan that he believes will mobilize one billion foot soldiers from the Christian church in missions by the year 2020.¹⁴⁶

According to Wooding, Rick Warren laid out his plan for a “new reformation” and a “worldwide spiritual awakening” at the Anaheim anniversary meeting. Further, Pastor Warren announced he was joining hands with Chuck Colson to assist him in his goal to establish the kingdom of God here on earth. According to Mark Kelly, reporting for the *Baptist Press News*:

Warren also introduced Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, who announced a new partnership that will introduce Warren’s Celebrate Recovery programs into prison ministries in 108 countries. The new agreement, signed April 16, also will mobilize congregations for Prison Fellowship’s Angel Tree ministry to the children of prisoners and promote Colson’s Worldview Studies Program, which helps believers apply Christian values to a wide range of issues in daily life.¹⁴⁷

It can be documented that Chuck Colson previously agreed to join hands with the Roman Catholic Church when he signed a document called “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium.”¹⁴⁸ So, if Rick Warren joins hands with Chuck Colson who has already joined hands with Roman Catholicism, what does that mean?

Supporters of “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” maintain it is not a theological agreement, but instead a statement of unity for the cause of moral and social reform. However, this same document states, “Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.” Further, existing divisions that obscure the one Christ and hinder the one mission of the church are confessed as “sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples.”¹⁴⁹

It can be pointed out that Rick Warren’s speech made at the Anaheim meeting encouraged his purpose-driven supporters to partner with him to usher in the kingdom of God here on earth by human effort. Quoting from his speech:

I stand before you confidently right now and say to you that God is going to use you to change the world. Some will say, “That’s impossible,” but I heard that line 25 years ago, and God took seven people and started Saddleback Church. Now we have a new vision and a whole lot more people to start with. The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody said, “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully

consecrated to him.” I'm looking at a stadium full of people who are telling God they will do *whatever it takes to establish God's Kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.”* What will happen if the followers of Jesus say to Him, “We are yours”? What kind of spiritual awakening will occur? ¹⁵⁰

What does Rick Warren mean by “whatever it takes”? Is it possible that joining together with Roman Catholics for advancing the kingdom of God may be in Rick Warren’s playbook? In an article titled “Man of Faith is Changing Religion - and Politics?” Jane Eisner quoted Warren as saying: “I’m not a politician, I’m a pastor,” ...and then noted that if evangelical Protestants teamed up with American Catholics, “that’s called a majority.” ¹⁵¹

Further, let’s look at another piece of factual information—this time a statement written by David Brooks in an article titled “A Natural Alliance.” Brooks makes some interesting observations about Rick Warren and the current trend he sees being promoted towards the “social gospel” and the gospel of Rome:

And when I look at the evangelical community, I see a community in the midst of a transformation—branching out beyond the traditional issues of abortion and gay marriage, and getting more involved in programs to help the needy. I see Rick Warren, who through his new PEACE initiative is sending thousands of people to Rwanda and other African nations to fight poverty and disease. I see Chuck Colson deeply involved in Sudan. I see Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals drawing up a service agenda that goes way beyond the normal turf of Christian conservatives. I see evangelicals who are more and more **influenced by Catholic social teaching**, with its emphasis on good works. I see the historical rift healing between those who emphasized personal and social morality. Most of all, I see a new sort of evangelical leader emerging. ¹⁵²

The article quoted was written by David Brooks and published May 26, 2005. On July 2, Assist News Agency published an article further clarifying Rick Warren’s PEACE Plan. In a phone interview with ANS while he was backstage at the massive Live 8 rock concert in Philadelphia, PA, Warren said, “I personally believe that these problems are not solvable by governments. I believe that only the church can solve them, because only the church has the most distribution channels in the world.” ¹⁵³

The article also quoted Warren as stating:

Our goal will be to enlist “one billion foot soldiers for the Kingdom of God,” who will permanently change the face of international missions to take on these five “global giants” for which the church can become the ultimate distribution and change agent to overcome Spiritual Emptiness, Self-serving Leadership, Poverty, Disease and Ignorance. ¹⁵⁴

Warren further explained that through the PEACE plan, small groups from hundreds of thousands of churches will attack these giants, armed with “five smooth stones” of (P) - Planting Churches; (E) - Equipping Leaders; (A) - Assisting the Poor; (C) - Caring for the Sick; and (E) - Educating the Next Generation. ¹⁵⁵

According to Warren, (with the help of Chuck Colson) “one billion foot soldiers who have the promise of the power of God” and “have the biblical mandate and the command of God” and “the moral authority to do it”—are being called on to establish the PEACE Plan. It looks to me as if the PEACE plan will have to be ecumenical in nature.

Remember the phrase Rick Warren coined: if evangelical Protestants teamed up with American Catholics, “that’s called a majority.”¹⁵⁶ Time will tell whether or not Warren and his team will be able to mobilize one billion purpose-driven foot soldiers for the cause of PEACE. However, one thing is certain—in order to recruit that many committed participants, the Roman Catholic Church will definitely have to participate.

Kingdom Now versus Bible Prophecy

Since the year 2000 Christianity has undergone some major changes. Many who were once looking for the return of Jesus have fallen asleep. We now live in a period of time where numerous prominent Christian leaders are telling the Christian masses that paying attention to the signs of our times in light of the Bible is a waste of time.

It should be apparent that Rick Warren and Brian McLaren both believe the kingdom of God is at hand. Warren, as we are about to document, has a low regard for Bible prophecy. McLaren’s Emergent philosophy, as has been documented, ridicules and discredits Bible prophecy. Perhaps this helps explain why so many, who once were anticipating the soon return of the Lord, seem to have become occupied with other things.

The following statement by Pastor Rick Warren is taken from his popular book *The Purpose Driven Life*. Regarding the value of paying attention to the signs Jesus said would characterize the days before His return and the importance of Bible prophecy, Warren wrote:

When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission to the world. He said in essence, “The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I have given you. Focus on that!”¹⁵⁷

It is amazing to me that a statement of this importance would be found in a number one best seller in the present-day Christian book market. While of course, witnessing the gospel “according to the Scriptures” is what Christians are to be about, Jesus also said to be alert and ready when He returns. Knowing the signs that He said would be happening at this time are of paramount importance. However, to this Warren further states:

Speculating on the exact timing of Christ’s return is futile, because Jesus said, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Since Jesus said he didn’t know the day or hour, why should you try to figure it out? ... *If you want Jesus to come back sooner, focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecy.*¹⁵⁸

The gospel according to Rick Warren rejects the importance of Bible prophecy. However the Bible does not support Warren’s view. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was emphatic about the importance of Bible prophecy. He wrote:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.¹⁵⁹

Christians are called to witness and be watchmen. There are no Scriptures that tell us to ignore the events that have been pointed out to us as signposts indicating the imminent return of Jesus. If we do, we might be like the virgins who fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom.¹⁶⁰

Purpose Driven in Support of the Emerging Kingdom

Rick Warren has expressed his support for the Emerging Church movement. This is what he wrote in a foreword for Dan Kimball's book, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*:

This book is a wonderful, detailed example of what a purpose-driven church can look like in a postmodern world. My friend Dan Kimball writes passionately, with a deep desire to reach the emerging generation and culture. You need to pay attention to him because times are changing.¹⁶¹

Further, Warren endorses Dan Kimball's Emergent style that is designed to reach the postmodern generation. Quoting from the foreword from Kimball's book:

As a pastor, I've watched churches adopt many contemporary styles in worship, programming, architecture, music, and other elements. That's okay, as long as the biblical message is unchanged. But whatever is in style now will inevitably be out of style soon, and the cycles of change are getting shorter and shorter, aided by technology and the media. New styles and preferences, like fashions, are always changing.¹⁶²

It is true over the past decades many trends have come and gone. Not all these trends have been based on sound biblical doctrine. In fact the reason many of these trends occurred was because Christians were vulnerable to "winds of doctrine" that had no biblical basis. According to the Bible, in the last days these winds of doctrine will influence Christians to fall away from the truth and accept ideas that "tickle their ears."¹⁶³

Rick Warren is enthusiastic about the "Emerging Church" because he believes it is the church of the future. In fact he believes this is what "the Purpose-Driven" movement he founded is about to become. He notes:

In the past twenty years, spiritual seekers have changed a lot. In the first place, there are a whole lot more of them. There are seekers everywhere. I've never seen more people so hungry to discover and develop the spiritual dimension of their lives. That is why there is such a big interest in Eastern thought, New Age practices, mysticism and the transcendent.¹⁶⁴

Further, he explains what the "Emerging Church" must do in order to emerge:

Today seekers are hungry for symbols and metaphors and experiences and stories that reveal the greatness of God. Because seekers are constantly changing, we must be sensitive to them like Jesus was; we must be willing to meet them on their own turf and speak to them in ways they understand.¹⁶⁵

I have read dozens of books written by Emergent authors and Warren's words are echoed over and over again. While it is claimed that the "message" must remain the same, that it is only the "method" that changes, it is apparent that the "message" is changing. All effort and promotion

seems to be headed in the direction of establishing the kingdom here on earth. The return of Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom is no longer acceptable. Those who support such a message have been relegated to a group of narrow-minded apocalyptic crackpots who are negative forces that must be considered dangerous.

Apocalyptic Millennialists

If you are not aware there is a growing movement to ridicule those who refuse to conform to the emerging view that the kingdom of God will be established here on earth by the church, the following headline should catch your attention: “Lutheran leader calls for ecumenical council to address growing biblical fundamentalism.”¹⁶⁶

This is how the article begins:

The leader of the nation’s largest Lutheran denomination has called for a global Christian council to address an *identity crisis* on how churches interpret and understand the Bible. Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Church in America called for Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran churches to come together to combat a *fundamentalist-millennialist-apocalypticist* reading of the Scripture.”¹⁶⁷

Bishop Hanson called for the formation of a “global ecumenical council” during the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America’s assembly in Orlando, Florida in August of 2005. Hanson is also president of the Geneva-based Lutheran World Federation.¹⁶⁸ His request for a group to monitor and expose anti-ecumenists who take the Bible literally carries some weight!

Hanson’s message contained other statements that indicate his disdain for Bible-believing Christians—particularly those who take Bible prophecy seriously and see Israel and the Middle East crisis as an end times sign post. For example, he said:

Mainline churches traditionally are uneasy with literal readings of Scripture, particularly in fundamentalist churches, regarding the end of the world and political unrest in the Middle East.¹⁶⁹

Now, let’s evaluate Bishop Hanson’s statement. He said that if you are a believer in a biblical end-times scenario that is based on taking the Bible literally, you are dangerous and counterproductive to the cause of Christ. He would like to form a council made up of Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and like-minded Lutherans to investigate and deal with this “crisis”.

In other words, Bishop Hanson views those who reject “Kingdom Now” and believe in “apocalypse next” as *fundamentalist-millennialist-apocalypticist* crackpots.

But there is more. Hanson seems to believe the Reformation was without cause and that the church must join with the Roman Catholic Church and embrace the Eucharistic Jesus in order to bring about an ecumenical unity and the kingdom of God here on earth. Quoting again from the article:

Hanson also urged the Vatican to work with the Lutheran World Federation to develop a joint statement on the Eucharist to mark the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017.¹⁷⁰

The Secret Message of Jesus

Before concluding this section, it is important to look at a few statements taken from McLaren's book *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*. Remember, McLaren has been quoted as saying: "Everything I've written to this point has been a preparation for this book."¹⁷¹

First, it is no secret that McLaren rejects the view that the Book of Revelation makes reference to a coming apocalyptic judgment in the future. In a chapter titled "The Future of the Kingdom" he wrote:

The book of Revelation is an example of popular literary genre of ancient Judaism, known today as *Jewish apocalyptic*. Trying to read it without understanding its genre would be like watching *Star Trek* or some other science fiction show thinking it was an historical documentary, or watching a sitcom as if were a religious parable, or reading a satire as if it were a biography—or like thinking you knew all about lions because you watched one pacing on a concrete slab one afternoon... instead of being a book about the future, it becomes a way of talking about the challenges of the immediate present. It becomes a book of warnings and promises.¹⁷²

Further, discrediting the validity of the Book of Revelation as a book that provides prophetic insight, McLaren states:

If Revelation were a blueprint of the distant future, it would have been unintelligible for its original readers, as well as the readers of all succeeding generations, and would only become truly and fully relevant for one generation—the one who happened to live in the period of time it is prognosticating about. But if Revelation is instead an example of the literature of the oppressed, full of ever-relevant warnings and promises, it presents each generation with needed inspiration and wisdom and encouragement. In this light, Revelation becomes a powerful book about the kingdom of God here and now, available to all.¹⁷³

Second, not only does McLaren believe the Book of Revelation is about "the kingdom of God here and now", he claims that Jesus had nothing to say about a period of catastrophic judgment either. In order to convince readers of his view, McLaren states:

Other readers will be thinking of long passage in the Gospels that seem to be full of prognostication from the lips of Jesus himself—prognostications that seem to relate to the end of the world. What are we to make of these passages, such as Matthew 24:25? This is a subject no less deep, complex, and contentious than interpreting Revelation, and in light of the thousands of books that have been written on the subject, it seems impossible to offer an alternative view in just a few paragraphs. Even so let me sketch out this alternative approach briefly in hopes that you will explore it more deeply on your own.

Since Jewish apocalyptic was a popular genre in Jesus' day, we would expect him to be influenced by it and use its language and metaphors. If that is the case, we would need to approach Jesus' language about the future as we would the language of Revelation. So against the backdrop of apocalyptic, we discover that phrases that sound like they're about the destruction of the world- like "the moon will turn to

blood” or “the stars will fall from the sky”—are actually rather typical stock phrases in Jewish apocalyptic. They are no more to be taken literally than phrases we might read in the paper today.¹⁷⁴

The entire message from beginning to end found in McLaren’s *The Secret Message of Jesus*, is the message that the kingdom of God will be established here on earth by Christians without King Jesus being present. The theme of his book is best described by the following words he wrote:

Sadly, for centuries at a time in too many places to count, the Christian religion has downplayed, misconstrued, or forgotten the secret message of Jesus entirely. Instead of being about the kingdom of God coming to earth, the Christian religion has too often been preoccupied with abandoning or escaping the earth and going to heaven... We have betrayed the message that the kingdom of God is available for all, beginning with the least and last and the lost—and have instead believed and taught that the kingdom of God is available for the elite, beginning with the correct and the clean and the powerful.¹⁷⁵

In this section, we provided an overview of the Emerging Church view that the kingdom of God is to be established here on earth through the efforts of the church. In our final section, we will see how this view along with other beliefs is building a bridge that seems to be headed towards a unification of Christianity with headquarters in Rome.

Section Nine
The Emerging Church and Bible Prophecy:
How the Emerging Church is Merging with Rome

There is no doubt that the Emerging Church is a movement that cannot be ignored. It is becoming apparent as time passes that the Emerging Church has the potential to reshape or redefine Christianity as many of the leaders claim it will.

While some have claimed the changes being implemented by the Emerging Church are comparable to the changes that took place during the Reformation, there are some distinct differences. The Emerging Church reformation is actually a reversal of what occurred in the past. Rather than pointing the lost to the Word of God and away from the Roman Catholic Church, those who were once rooted in the truth are being led away from God's Word to Roman Catholic dogmas, traditions and extra-biblical experiences.

Throughout this paper, I have attempted to present some of the major ideas and trends that are consistent with the Emergent Church views and beliefs. In this section we will attempt to evaluate the direction the Emerging Church is headed in light of Bible prophecy.

Beware of Spiritual Deception

While the Scriptures warn the Last Days will be characterized by a time of great spiritual deception and a falling away from the faith, the Emerging Church movement is silent about these warnings. The fact that many supporters claim Christianity must be reinvented, should be sufficient evidence that this new reformation is a perquisite for apostasy, not revival.

While the thrust of the movement seems to be concentrated on the establishment of the gospel of the kingdom of God here on earth, how realistic is this in light of the warnings issued from God's Word? How is it feasible to suggest that the church will establish the kingdom of God here on earth when Jesus said the time before He returned would be "as it was in the days of Noah"?¹⁷⁶

While it is a noble goal for the church to win the world to Jesus Christ, is this really what the Bible states will happen? What about Paul's warning that God will allow a strong delusion to overcome those who have departed from the truth of God's Word? Is it possible this is the very thing that is underway? Notice what Paul states:

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:¹⁷⁷

Paul's words to Timothy indicate clearly that spiritual deception will characterize the Last Days:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.¹⁷⁸

Certainly the words of warning Paul wrote to the church at Corinth regarding Satan's seductive plans should be very relevant to the church-at-large today:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.¹⁷⁹

It would appear that many have forgotten these basic warnings found in Scripture regarding a Last Days deceptive scenario that would lead many astray. Do emergent teachings lead away from the simple gospel for another gospel? Is it possible the world and the church are being set up by "another spirit" for "another Christ"? These are important questions that need to be answered in light of the new doctrines that are being promoted by Emerging Church proponents.

One World Church

While the Emergent Church promotes the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth before the King returns, this is not consistent with the scenario found in the Bible. The Bible warns about a Last Days counterfeit bride that will someday be established in the name of Christ.¹⁸⁰ This religious system will promote a peace plan that appears to be successful.¹⁸¹ Instead it is a plan that is inspired by Satan, a plan which is Babylonian in nature that will incur God's wrath and judgment.¹⁸²

Most in the Emergent Church are promoting the idea that the kingdom of God can be established here on earth, and this is exactly what the Roman Catholic Church has been promoting through the centuries. It is only a matter of time when we will see the two plans merge. The Roman Catholic Church's agenda to establish the Triumph of the Eucharist (Eucharistic Reign of Jesus) will be accomplished and is not far away. The New Evangelization Program is in full swing and will continue to "rekindle amazement" focused on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist through the promotion of Eucharistic adoration. The leaders of the Emerging Church, perhaps without knowing it, are being seduced by deceptive forces to join hands with Rome to help establish this kingdom.

Therefore, for the first time since the Reformation, we have a scenario in place that has the potential to seduce the separated brethren back to the Mother of All Churches on a global basis. While this ecumenical plan is in the name of the Savior, the Bible warns that spiritual deception will be one of the major signs that the Savior will soon return.

Such a powerful delusion will require two major trends, both of which we see are presently underway. First, the light of God's Word will be further diminished and replaced with a faith that is experienced-based. Second, this experience-based faith will be driven by lying signs and wonders that will become more and more apparent and seductive.¹⁸³ Not only will we see a unification of Christianity, eventually all religions will be drawn together for the common cause of peace, centered around the appearances of a counterfeit Jesus that appears on Roman Catholic altars all over the world.¹⁸⁴

The Many Roads to Rome

This paper has provided documentation showing the Emerging Church has definitely emerged. The question remains: what can we expect to happen in the future? If evangelical Bible-believing Christians continue to be led away from the light of God's Word, will we see a return to the spiritual darkness that existed before the Reformation occurred or will there be a great revival and the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth?

In my opinion the Emerging Church fits the Last Days biblical scenario that indicates a departure from the faith before the return of Christ during a time of great apostasy and delusion. While there will be a remnant that will hold true to the Scriptures, Bible-believing Christians will be a minority, not the majority. In the future there will be persecution and ridicule for those who refuse to accept that the kingdom of God can be established here on earth with its headquarters in Rome.

The return to Rome has many roads arriving from many different places traveled by those who have encountered a variety of experiences. Based on the documentation we have been able to provide, it is reasonable to suggest that the Emerging Church is one of the major ways that unsuspecting pilgrims are being led on their journey home.

Scripture will no longer be the ultimate authority as the basis for the Christian faith. The centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ will be replaced by humanistic methods that promote a social gospel and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. The millennial view that Jesus Christ will physically return to rule and reign in a literal thousand year period of time here on planet earth will be considered heretical. Those who support this idea will be labeled dangerous fanatics who are resisting the new thing God is doing.

The trend towards "replacement theology" will continue—the view that the church takes the place of Israel and Israel has no prophetic significance. Those who believe the Book of Revelation points to an apocalyptic future when God's wrath will be poured out on earth will be considered crackpots who are a danger to society and the well being of the kingdom of God.

The ecumenical nature of the Emerging Church shows that the process to reunite with Rome has already begun. As Christianity becomes more and more experience-based through the promotion of sensual stimulation of the senses, it will be transformed from a faith that is based upon God's Word, to a faith that is based on subjective experiences. Images, statues, icons, candles and incense will become avenues to mystical encounters that convince the spiritual seeker that they have found the truth.

Contemplative practices based on Eastern religious metaphysical techniques will continue to abound, convincing seekers they have drawn closer to God. Sound doctrine based on the Scriptures will be replaced by stories and fables because "Christians" desire to have their "ears tickled."¹⁸⁵

Manifestations of the spiritual dimension will appear and "signs and wonders" of the deceptive variety will abound. There will be more and more attention paid to "Mary" the Mother of the Eucharist and her son the Eucharistic Jesus. Appearances of this Jesus will manifest in Roman Catholic churches around the world and there will be healings and miraculous phenomenon occurring.

Finally, these lying signs and wonders will be so effective the religions of the world will be drawn together for the cause of peace. The Triumph of the Eucharist (Eucharistic Reign of Jesus) will have been accomplished and it will appear as if all is well. Christian Babylonianism will have been established in the name of Jesus.

Satan's attempt to thwart God will have reached its climax.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to examine the Emerging Church in the light of God's Word. Facts have been presented and we have looked at the Scriptures as a means of discerning and understanding. Scriptures with regard to a prophetic view of the future have also been considered.

The scenario of the probable unfolding of future events that has been presented is consistent with what the Bible teaches and not merely some imaginative fabrication. In concluding, the words of Paul written to Timothy regarding how to minister to a last days church that has sidetracked into deception, seem appropriate:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.¹⁸⁶

¹ 1 Timothy 4:1

² Online posting: http://cbs2chicago.com/topstories/local_story_191215254.html, cited July 10, 2006.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Proverbs 16:3

⁵ Matthew 15:8-9

⁶ Matthew 7:21-24

⁷ Hebrews 11:6

⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:4

⁹ Genesis 3:1

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 4:1

¹¹ Luke 18:8

¹² Matthew 25:1-13

¹³ 1 Timothy 4:1

¹⁴ Matthew 24:3-4

¹⁵ Matthew 24:23-25

¹⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-11

¹⁷ Oakland and Tetlow, *Another Jesus? The Eucharistic Christ and the New Evangelization*, Understand The Times: Santa Ana, CA, 2005.

¹⁸ Online posting: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/new.php?n=3686>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Online posting: http://zenit.org/english/show_14.php

²³ Online posting: <http://zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=72473>

²⁴ Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

-
- ²⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9
- ²⁷ Doug Pagitt.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 41.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 41.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 28-29.
- ³¹ Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2004.
- ³² Doug Pagitt, p.166.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 167.
- ³⁴ Doug Pagitt, p. 102.
- ³⁵ Doug Pagitt, p. 103.
- ³⁶ 2 Timothy 2:24-26
- ³⁷ Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, p. 34.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 420.
- ³⁹ Leonard Sweet, p. 69.
- ⁴⁰ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generation*, pp. 13-14.
- ⁴¹ Michael Slaughter, *Unlearning Church: Just When You Thought You Had Leadership All Figured Out*, p. 38-39.
- ⁴² Dan Kimball p. 127.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 133.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 143.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 155.
- ⁴⁶ www.seminary.edu/aboutnorthern/index.html
- ⁴⁷ Robert Webber, "Wanted Ancient-Future Talent," *Worship Leader*, May/June 2005, p. 10.
- ⁴⁸ Dan Kimball, p. 185.
- ⁴⁹ Rob Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church*, p.129.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 197.
- ⁵¹ Julie B. Sevig, *The Lutheran*, "Ancient New," Online posting:
<http://www.thelutheran.org/0109/page36.html>, cited September 2001.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Gary Stern, "Episcopal 'U2-charist' uses songs in service", Online posting:
http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-10-25-u2-churches_x.htm, cited October 25, 2006.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Romans 10:17
- ⁵⁷ Chuck Fromm, "The Impact of the Image", *Worship Leader Magazine*, January-February 2005.
- ⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 4: 15-16, 19
- ⁵⁹ Chuck Fromm.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Dan Kimball, p. 127.
- ⁶² Ibid., p.136.
- ⁶³ Ibid., p. 164.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ Acts 20:28-30
- ⁶⁷ Jude 4
- ⁶⁸ 1 Timothy 4:1
- ⁶⁹ Webber, p. 135.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Webber, p. 85.
- ⁷³ Dr. Dale Dirksen, *Passport Magazine*, Fall 2005, Vol. 64. No. 2, p. 6.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 6-7.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 7.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.

-
- ⁷⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16
- ⁷⁹ Webber, pp. 88-89 (italics in original).
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 89.
- ⁸¹ Ibid. (italics in original).
- ⁸² "Importance of Studying the Church Fathers," Online posting: <http://home.comcast.net/~icuwweb/c01701.htm>, cited November 1, 2006.
- ⁸³ Ibid.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Marcus Grodi, *Journeys Home: The Journeys of Protestant Clergy and Laity Coming Home to the Catholic Church and the Coming Home Network International, A Lay Ministry Committed to Helping Them*, p. xvi.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 88.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 89
- ⁸⁹ Isaiah 2:5-6 (NASB)
- ⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 18:9-13
- ⁹¹ Agnieszka Tennant, Online posting: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/120/42.0.html>, cited May 19, 2005.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Ibid.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ⁹⁵ Brian Flynn, *Running Against The Wind: The Transformation of a New Age Medium and His Warning to the Church*, Lighthouse Trails Publishing: Silverton, OR .
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 132.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 132-133.
- ⁹⁸ 1 Timothy 4:1
- ⁹⁹ Thomas Keeting, "Dimensions of Contemplative Prayer," Online posting: <http://www.centeringprayer.com/OpenHeart/open02.htm>
- ¹⁰⁰ St. John The Cross, "Christian Contemplation Today," Online posting: <http://www.innerexplorations.com/catchspmys/frompl1.htm>
- ¹⁰¹ Jan Johnson, *When the Soul Listens*, Harrisburg, PA: NavPres, 1999, p. 16; quoted by Brian Flynn, *Running Against The Wind*, p. 133.
- ¹⁰² Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, op cit., p. 48, citing Jacquelyn Small, *Awakening in Time*, New York: Bantam Books, 1991, p.261.
- ¹⁰³ Brian Flynn, pp. 137-138.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ray Yungen, op. cit., p. 62, Citing William Shannon, *The Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story*, New York: Crossroads Publishers Company, 1992, p. 276.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ray Yungen, op. cit., p. 75, citing David Steindl-Rast, *Recollections of Thomas Merton's Last Days in the West*, (Monastic Studies), 7:10, 1969.
- ¹⁰⁶ Brian Flynn, p. 142.
- ¹⁰⁷ Richard Foster and Emilie Griffin, *Spiritual Classics*, Harper: San Francisco, 2000, First Edition, p. 17.
- ¹⁰⁸ Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Harper: San Francisco, 1992, First Edition, p. 157.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 156.
- ¹¹⁰ Matthew Hay Brown, *Maryland News*, "Returning to the rituals: Some evangelicals are exploring high liturgy, March 2, 2006, p. 1-2.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 2.
- ¹¹² Ibid., p. 3.
- ¹¹³ Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices For Everyday Life*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2005.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 7-8.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 16.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 16-17.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 65.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

-
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 17-18.
- ¹²⁰ Mike Perschon, "Disciplines, Mystics and the Contemplative Life," Online posting: <http://www.youthspecialties.com/articles/topics/spirituality/desert.php>, cited November 2, 2006.
- ¹²¹ Ibid.
- ¹²² Ibid.
- ¹²³ Robert Webber, p. 135.
- ¹²⁴ Matthew Hay Brown, p. 4.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid.
- ¹²⁶ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, p. 114.
- ¹²⁷ Robert Webber, *Signs of Wonder: The Phenomenon of Convergence in Modern Liturgical and Charismatic Churches*, Star Song Publishing Group: Nashville, 1992, pp. 3-4. [Emphasis mine.]
- ¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 5, [emphasis mine.]
- ¹²⁹ Online posting: <http://www.brianmclaren.net/biography.html>, cited November 3, 2006.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid.
- ¹³¹ Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Youth Specialties Books: El Cajon, CA, 2004, p. 18.
- ¹³² Ibid., (italics in original).
- ¹³³ Ibid., p. 35 (italics in original).
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 45.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 50.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 52.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 52-53.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 54.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 55.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 175-176.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 237.
- ¹⁴² Ibid.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 237-238.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 238.
- ¹⁴⁵ Mark Kelly, Online posting: www.biblicalrecorder.org/content/news/2005/4_19_2005/ne1900505rick.shtml, April 19, 2005.
- ¹⁴⁶ Online posting: <http://assistnews.net/stories/s05040087.htm> (emphasis not in original).
- ¹⁴⁷ Online posting: <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=20603>
- ¹⁴⁸ Online posting: <http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html>
- ¹⁴⁹ Online posting: <http://watch.pair.com/ect.html>
- ¹⁵⁰ Online posting: http://www.biblicalrecorder.org/content/news/2005/4_19_2005/ne190405rick.shtml (emphasis added).
- ¹⁵¹ Jane Eisner, Online posting: <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2005/May/29/op/op15p.html?print=on>, May 29, 2005.
- ¹⁵² Online posting: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/26/opinion/26brooks.html?ex=1120276800&en=86c1a54de5878583&ei=5070&hp&oref=login>, (emphasis not in the original).
- ¹⁵³ Dan Wooding, Assist, Online posting: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s05070005.htm>, July 2, 2005.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁶ Jane Eisner, (statement by Rick Warren taken from this article).
- ¹⁵⁷ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Life*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 285-286.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 285-286, (emphasis not in original).
- ¹⁵⁹ 2 Peter 1:19
- ¹⁶⁰ Matthew 25:1-13
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁶² Dan Kimball, p. 7.
- ¹⁶³ 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 4:3
- ¹⁶⁴ Dan Kimball, p. 6.
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹⁶⁶ Online posting: http://news.ucc.org/index.php?option=cpm_content&task=view7id=2977Itemid=54, Religion News Service, August 11, 2005, (emphasis mine).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., (emphasis not in original).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*, W. Publishing Group, A Division of Thomas Nelson, 2006, pp. 175-176.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 176-177.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 177-178.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 24:37

¹⁷⁷ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-11

¹⁷⁸ 2 Timothy 4:3-4

¹⁷⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

¹⁸⁰ Revelation 17:1-5

¹⁸¹ I Thessalonians 5:1-5

¹⁸² Revelation 19:2

¹⁸³ Matthew 24:24

¹⁸⁴ Matthew 24:23

¹⁸⁵ 2 Timothy 4:1-5

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.