



THE  
**EMERGING  
CHURCH**  
IS  
**COMING**

eBook Series:  
*Issues Facing the Churches\**

David Cloud

*The Emerging Church Is Coming*

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ISBN 978-1-58318-132-4

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Published by Way of Life Literature  
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Printed in Canada by  
Bethel Baptist Print Ministry

# Table of Contents

<b>About Way of Life's eBooks .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Powerful Publications for These Times .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The Emerging Church Is Spreading.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Targeting the Children of Fundamentalists .....	17
Change Agents .....	18
Christianized Worldliness .....	20
An Ecumenical Blending.....	22
Hatred of Biblical Fundamentalism .....	22
A Magnet for Rebels .....	23
<b>The Shack: The Emerging Church's New God.....</b>	<b>28</b>
Redefining God.....	31
The Shack's God Is Emergent and New Age.....	37
<b>Denying the Imminency of Christ's Return.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Contemplative Mysticism .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>What Brought Evangelicalism to This place? .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Shallow Evangelism and Confusion About the Gospel .....	46
The Judge Not Philosophy; Tolerance for Error; a Positive Emphasis .....	51
Rejection of Biblical Separation .....	54
Biblical Ignorance and Lack of Education in the Issues Facing Us Today .....	55
Worldliness.....	56

Modern Bible Versions.....57  
Contemporary Christian Music.....58  
Pride of Scholarship.....59

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locations in America, England, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the Middle East. The package consists of an apologetics course entitled *AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH* (both print and eBook editions) plus an extensive series of Powerpoint/Keynote presentations. (Keynote is the Apple version of Powerpoint.) The 1,800 PowerPoint slides deal with archaeology, evolution/creation science, and the prophecies pertaining to Israel's history. The material in the 360-page course is extensive, and the teacher can decide whether to use all of it or to select only some portion of it for his particular class and situation. After each section there are review questions to help the students focus on the most important points. The course can be used for private study as well as for a classroom setting. Sections include The Bible's Nature, The Bible's Proof, The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Bible's Difficulties, Historical Evidence for Jesus, Evidence for Christ's Resurrection, Archaeological Treasures Confirming the Bible, A History of Evolution, Icons of Evolution, Icons of Creation, Noah's Ark and the Global Flood.

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Dakota wrote: “If I were going to the mission field and could carry only three books, they would be the Strong’s concordance, a hymnal, and the *Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia*.” Missionary author Jack Moorman says: “The encyclopedia is excellent. The entries show a ‘distilled spirituality.’” A computer edition of the Encyclopedia is available as a standalone eBook for PDF, Kindle, and PUB. It is also available as a module for *Swordseacher*.

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# Introduction

This is an eyewitness report on the February 2009 National Pastor's Conference in San Diego, California, and a warning about the emerging church and its growing influence.

The conference was sponsored by Zondervan and InterVarsity Press, two of the largest and most influential Christian publishers. Their authors represent the mainstream of evangelicalism today as well as its cutting edge, from Bill Hybels and Rick Warren to Rob Bell and Brian McLaren.

*Christianity Today* magazine was prominently represented at the conference. Andy Crouch, a senior editor, was one of the main speakers and interviewers. He also led a praise and worship session. Other speakers included Bill Hybels, Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Leighton Ford, Gordon Fee, Shane Claiborne, J.P. Moreland, John Ortberg, David Kinnaman, Scot McKnight, Alex McManus, and Christopher Wright.

There were roughly 1,500 pastors and Christian workers in attendance.

The *emerging church* is the name that has been coined for a new approach to missions and church life among some “evangelicals” for these present times.

In reality, the emerging church is simply the latest heresy within the broad tent of evangelicalism. When the “new

evangelicalism” swept onto the scene in the late 1940s with its bold repudiation of “separatism” and its emphasis on dialogue with heretics, the door was left open for every sort of heresy to infiltrate the “evangelical” fold, and that is precisely what has happened. The Bible does not warn in vain, “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Emerging church teaching tends to be complicated, convoluted, contradictory, and confusing.

Coming to grips with it is like trying to pin a glass marble to a table with an ice pick. It is movable and if forced to stand still and be consistent, it shatters!

In addition, it is evolving, and there is a “conservative” side to the emerging church issue that further complicates things.

Regardless, we must deal with the emerging church because its influence is growing.

# The Emerging Church Is Spreading

Brian McLaren told how that Willow Creek Community Church had never had a sermon on environment, poverty, war and peace until last year, but now they are on the change-the-world, build-the-kingdom bandwagon. And Willow Creek is not just one mega-church near Chicago; it is also an association of 12,000 churches.

Emergents Brian McLaren, Scot McKnight, and Shane Claiborne spoke at Willow Creek's Shift conference in April 2008.

McLaren also described Rick Warren's plunge into emerging church waters with his P.E.A.C.E. plan. When launched in April 2005, Warren said it would "change the world." He wants to enlist "one billion foot soldiers" to overcome the five "global giants" of "Spiritual Emptiness, Self-serving Leadership, Poverty, Disease, and ignorance (or illiteracy)." Toward this objective he is calling for a broad ecumenical and interfaith alliance of evangelicals, modernists, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, homosexuals, pro-abortionists, etc.

Warren has promoted McLaren on his *Ministry Toolbox* web site. Warren also recommends the very radical and liberal Leonard Sweet. Warren's recommendation appears on the cover of Sweet's book *Soul Tsunami*, which says, "It is time for a Postmodern Reformation ... Reinvent yourself for the 21st century or die" (p. 75). Warren and Sweet collaborated on an audio set entitled



*Tides of Change*, and Sweet spoke at Saddleback Church in January 2008 at a small groups training conference.

Rick Warren is a prominent pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention, a denomination that is permeated with emerging church philosophy.

## **Targeting the Children of Fundamentalists**

I attended the conference in San Diego because I am concerned about the next generation. The emerging evangelicals are targeting our children and grandchildren. Brian McLaren counseled emergents to be patient as opposed to trying to change churches overnight. In his 2008 book “Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices,” McLaren described his plan to infiltrate churches and Christian institutions that are currently rejecting the emerging church. He says:

“But over time, what they reject will find or create safe space outside their borders and become a resource so that many if not most of the grandchildren of today’s fundamentalists will learn and grow and move on from the misguided battles of their forebears [Biblicist Christians]” (p. 133).

McLaren is saying that emerging doctrine will infiltrate Biblicist churches from without through “resources” such as books, videos, and web sites.

This is exactly how New Evangelicalism has so deeply infiltrated fundamentalist Bible churches and independent Baptist churches over the past two decades

and it is doubtless how the more radical emerging church doctrines will infiltrate them in the coming decades.

The conference represents the fruit of the New Evangelical movement founded by Billy Graham and Harold Ockenga and the post-World War II generation of evangelical leaders who rejected biblical fundamentalism. They founded Fuller Theological Seminary and Christianity Today, both of which were represented at this conference. Fifty years ago these men said, “We renounce separatism,” and this is where their children are today. It is a loud warning to Biblicist Christians who are tempted to go in the contemporary direction.

### **Change Agents**

The emerging church aims to transform traditional biblical churches into a new emerging model and they are employing many tactics toward that end.

One tactic is to create doubts and to bring about a re-thinking process, but they don't lead the individual back to the Bible for the answers. It is not wrong to re-think things, particularly methodology, but our thinking must be carefully bounded by Scripture or we will find ourselves in deep spiritual trouble.

Another tactic is to get churches to see themselves through the eyes of the world and to encourage them to adapt to this viewpoint. For example, since the world doesn't like “judgmentalism” and criticism, the churches

must stop judging and be tolerant and tone down the “negative preaching,” and since the world is put off by an “anti-gay” stance, then the churches must adopt a new approach to sexual issues.

God’s people should try to understand the people we are trying to reach and we should care what they think of us at some level, but the fact remains that the world has always looked upon Christians negatively. That was true in the first century and it is true today. Jesus said that the world will hate us because it hated him (John 15:18-20; 17:14). The only way to change the negative way that the world looks upon Bible-believing Christians is to compromise the faith. The emerging church solution, to make Christianity “cool,” is simply not an option for Bible believers.

Another tactic that the emerging church uses to bring change is to promote contradictory doctrinal positions. This is the dialectic approach. Zondervan and InterVarsity Press epitomize this. They publish men who claim to believe the Bible is infallible and who have a personal testimony of salvation and supposedly believe in hell (e.g., Bill Hybels and Rick Warren) alongside of men who do not believe in the substitutionary atonement and are convinced that “an exclusive, hell-oriented gospel is not the way forward” (Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 120, f. 48).

These contradictory positions ultimately cause readers to conclude that doctrine cannot be dogmatically known and is not very important. It destroys doctrinal stability.

## **Christianized Worldliness**

The worldliness that permeates the emerging church is breath-taking. The general sessions of the National Pastor's Conference began with half-hour stand-up comedy routines, some of it pretty crude. The comedy routines were followed by hard rock concerts complete with massive pounding speakers, colored lights, smoke, and huge rear-projection screens. All of this took place in a darkened hall. Some of the speakers, such as Will Willimon, head of the United Methodist Church, used profanities that we would not repeat in print. The females were typically dressed immodestly.

Even the most conservative branches of the emerging church have made shocking compromises with the world. They claim that they relate to the world without being conformed to it, but in reality they are deeply conformed to it.

Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, claims to be "THEOLOGICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND CULTURALLY LIBERAL" ("Pastor Provocateur," *Christianity Today*, Sept. 21, 2007). He criticizes "hardcore fundamentalism that throws rocks at culture" (ibid.) and defines himself as "relevant," "contextual," and "cool" ("Conference examines the emerging church," Baptist Press, Sept. 25, 2007).

Driscoll says, "Restrictive Christians go too far and name everything a universal sin, forbidding some culture

activities that the Bible does not, such as listening to certain musical styles, getting tattoos, watching movies, smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol, and body piercing” (*The Radical Reformation*, p. 103).

Driscoll says that he learned to preach by “studying stand-up comedians.” He said that seeing the filthy comedian Chris Rock live was “a better study in homiletics than most classes on the subject” (*Confessions of a Reformation Rev.*, p. 70)

Mark Driscoll’s church sets up a “champagne bar” at its New Year’s Eve dance parties. The December 2007 party was called “Red Hot Bash2” and featured “one of the top dance bands in the Northwest.” Participants were invited to “come bust a move on the enormous dance floor” and were reminded to bring their IDs.

Mars Hill has “beer-brewing lessons” and operates the Paradox Theater which has hosted hundreds of secular rock concerts. At one concert, a Japanese punk band performed naked.

Mars Hill shows R-rated movies. In fact, Driscoll says that some of his sermons on sex are R-rated and that visiting youth groups have been embarrassed and walked out half-way through the message (*Confessions of a Reformation Rev.*, p. 134).

And this is the very conservative side of the emerging church!

God's Word says, "And be not conformed to this world," and, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world" (Romans 12:2; 1 John 1:15).

## **An Ecumenical Blending**

The doctrinal variety represented at the conference was amazing. There were Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Mennonites, United Church of Christ, Roman Catholics, and others.

The speakers included a Catholic priest (Emmanuel Katongole) who teaches at the Methodist-affiliated Duke Divinity School, a Jewish agnostic (A.J. Jacobs, author of "A Year of Living Biblically"), a man who has written a book depicting God as a woman (Paul Young, author of "The Shack"), and a man who denies the infallibility of Scripture, the substitutionary blood atonement, an eternal fiery hell, creationism, and a literal fall (Brian McLaren).

All of these were warmly accepted by the other speakers and the 1,500 pastors and Christian workers in attendance. No one that we talked to at the conference was willing to say a word against anything or anyone.

## **Hatred of Biblical Fundamentalism**

The only enemy that was clearly identified and attacked was biblical fundamentalism. The conference celebrated a wide variety of heretics, but the believer who takes the Bible seriously and is earnestly contending for the faith was held up to ridicule.

Even the comedians targeted them. Michael Jr. called them “the overly saved.” He told a crude joke about a dog licking itself and said, “If you didn’t laugh at that, you are the overly saved.”

Brian McLaren ridiculed those who believe in a literal six-day creation.

Rod Bell described those who want to maintain “doctrinal purity and theological correctness” and make life difficult for emerging pastors. Bell quoted Titus 3:10 from the Today’s New International Version, which says that divisive persons should be rejected, and he advised that this is how pastors should deal with doctrinal puritans. This perversion of Scripture turns truth on its head. Paul was not warning about divisive persons in general. The truth itself can be divisive, and Jesus and the apostles caused great divisions. Paul was warning, rather, about those who are divisive through false teaching and refuse to submit to the truth.

## **A Magnet for Rebels**

The emerging church is a magnet for those who have rejected the “old-fashioned” New Testament faith and who despise traditional Bible-believing churches, dogmatic biblical preaching, and biblical “judgmentalism” in regard to lifestyle choices.

In a video-recorded interview, Zach Lind, drummer for the secular rock band Jimmy Eat World, told us that he

grew up in a conservative type Baptist church and made a profession of faith when he was young, but he only did so because he didn't want to be left out of the communion service. He secretly loved rock & roll and didn't like to hear preaching against that sort of thing, so he left church and did not return to Christianity until he discovered the emerging church. Now he has the freedom to be a Christian and also a drummer in a secular rock band. Following is an excerpt from the interview:

“The belief system that they emphasized did not necessarily resonate with me. For instance, when I was in junior high they played a video to the junior high group called ‘Hells Bells: The Dangers of Rock & Roll.’ And I was sort of secretly in the closet a big rock & roll music fan, listening to all different kinds of bands that typically the church wouldn't approve. ... Ultimately in high school I started a band with some friends; that was 15 or 16 years ago, and we still are a band today; we're a secular rock band. I've lived in the world, and I've realized that a lot of the religious goods and services that I was provided as a kid just sort of fell flat when I entered into the real world. As I was trying to reconcile those kinds of things, I was free falling. The framework of Christianity wasn't viable to me. It was nice to come into contact with some writers like Brian McLaren and Rob Bell and Dallas Willard that gave me a different framework, a different perspective, in order to construct a life of faith that really resonated with me. Because of my experience with the band and whatever notoriety I've gained with that, I've been able to make some friendships with people that I really respect and that have really shaped me. It's been life-giving. ... The gospel that I believe now is totally different than the gospel I grew up with. The gospel I grew up with was a transactional gospel, this idea that if I have the right belief now I will be somehow saved from some kind of punishment later. ... Dallas Willard reminded



me that the kingdom of God is not some future destination, that the kingdom of God is now.”

This theme runs throughout the emerging church.

In *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller tells how that he refused to be restricted by the teaching of traditional-type churches. He wanted to drink beer and watch raunchy movies and talk trashy and run around with atheists and other rebels.

In *A Renegade's Guide to God*, David Foster mocks “Bible thumpers” and calls for a “renegade” type of Christianity that “resists being named, revolts at being shamed, and rebels against being tamed” (p. 8). He says, “We won’t be ‘told’ what to do or ‘commanded’ how to behave” (p. 10).

In *If Grace Is So Amazing, Why Don't We Like It*, Donald McCullough says that he doesn’t like the type of preaching that says, “... don’t do that, curb your appetites, reign in desire, discipline and sacrifice yourself” (p. 104).

These people are rebels against the plain teaching of the Bible, and as a magnet for rebellion the emerging church holds a wide attraction in these last days as prophesied in Scripture:

“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” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

This prophecy describes a great turning away from Biblical truth among professing Christians. It says they will reject the sound teaching of Scripture and desire a new type of Christianity that allows them to live after their own lusts. That is a strange type of Christianity, but we are seeing its fulfillment before our very eyes. The prophecy says there will be heaps of teachers who will give the people this new type of Christianity, and this is exactly what we see. Christian bookstores are filled with books and the Internet is filled with Christian articles and blogs, but the majority of this material does not contain the straightforward preaching of God's Word that reproves, rebukes, and exhorts (2 Timothy 4:2). Rather, it is filled with doctrine that scratches the itching ears of those who have rejected the Bible. It is filled with pop novelties, psychology, self-esteemism, pampering of the ego, conformity to the world, heresies, questionings, boastings, doubtings, illicit fellowship with error (e.g., the contemplative spirituality movement), railings against "legalism" falsely so called, fairy tales, fictional romance, reconstructed history, fascination with ancient heretics wrongly called "church fathers," and many other things.

The New Evangelicalism of the 1950s was a rebellion against strict biblical Christianity, and the emerging church is simply a step further in that fearful direction.

Rebellion is a natural product of our fallen nature. The "old man," as it is called in Scripture, which we inherited from Adam's fall, is at enmity against God and His Word.

True Christianity requires a new birth. There are no “second generation” Christians in the true biblical sense. It has been truthfully said that God has no grandchildren. Thus each person that grows up in a Christian home must come to grips with the gospel for himself and herself, and because the devil and the indwelling fallen nature are real, there is a fierce spiritual battle that must be waged.

I faced this battle in my youth. I grew up in a Baptist church and went through the motions of receiving Christ and joining the church, but I wanted my own way more than Christ’s. I therefore rejected the Bible, left the church, and went very far into the world before being converted at age 23.

Because of this ongoing battle that rages with each new generation, the rebellion that is part and parcel of the emerging church philosophy is very enticing to a wide range of people.

## **The Shack: The Emerging Church's New God**

One of the speakers at the National Pastor's Convention was William Young, author of "The Shack." It has held first place on the New York Times bestseller list for Paperback Trade Fiction for nine months and as of January 2009 had sold five million copies. It is being translated into 30 languages, and a motion picture is in the works.

Young had his own break-out session and was interviewed in one of the general sessions by Andy Crouch. It was said that 57% of the attendees had read "The Shack," and Young was enthusiastically received. Crouch treated him as a fellow believer and did not even hint that there might be a damnable theological problem with the way that God is depicted in this book.

When Young said, "I don't feel responsible for the fact that it ["The Shack"] is tampering with people's paradigms," or how people think about God, the crowd responded with clapping, cheers, and laughter. This outfit loves to tamper with traditional Bible doctrine and there is no fear of God for doing so!

In "The Shack," Young presents traditional Bible-believing Christianity as hypocritical and hurtful. The book's main character grew up under "rigorous rules," and his father, who was an elder in the church, was "a

closet drinker” and treated his family with cruelty when drunk (p. 7).

Hypocrisy is very injurious to the cause of Christ, but hypocrisy on the part of Christians does not disprove the Bible. Let God be true and every man a liar (Romans 3:4)! All too often this type of thing is used as an excuse by rebels. I know this by personal experience. In my youth I used the inconsistencies that I saw in Baptist churches to excuse my rejection of the church. The chief problem, though, was not the hypocrisy of others but my own rebellion and love for the world. When I repented of my wickedness at age 23 and turned to Christ and received the Bible as God’s holy Word, I stopped blaming others and took responsibility for myself before Almighty God.

Rules and obligations under God’s grace are not wrong. They are an integral part of Bible Christianity. We are saved by grace without works, but we are saved “unto good works” (Ephesians 2:8-10). The New Testament epistles are filled with rules and obligations that believers are expected to keep and are filled with warnings about disobedience. The true grace of God does not let us live as we please. It teaches us, rather, “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). That is a very strict standard of Christian living.

There is hypocrisy in churches and there are false gospels that are law-based rather than grace-based and the fact is that most churches today are corrupt, just as the Bible

prophesied, but the solution is not to reject the literal interpretation of Scripture and create a new God! God is amazingly compassionate and loving and He has proven that on the cross, but God is also holy and just and requires obedience and hates and punishes sin, and that side of God cannot be ignored without creating a false God.

The flesh wearies greatly of the holiness of God! I can testify to that. From time to time in my Christian life I have gotten discouraged at God. It is not a simple thing to reconcile God's love and grace with His awful holiness and justice. On one hand, the New Testament tells us that the believer is forgiven, redeemed, justified, accepted in the beloved, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, holy and without blame before God, and seated in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1-3). On the other hand, the same New Testament tells us that the believer must be exceedingly careful about how he lives before God. We are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1), which is the highest conceivable standard. The believer who does not pursue this is in danger of being judged (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:13-17; 9:26-27; 11:27-32; Hebrews 13:4; 2 John 8-11; Revelation 2:4-5, 16, 22-23; 3:15-16). There is even a sin unto death (1 John 5:16-17; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30). Thus there must be many legitimate warnings in the Christian life (Acts 20:31; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15).

These things seem to be contradictory to the fallen flesh and to the natural man, but they are two sides of the same compassionate, thrice holy God, and to reject either one is reject the true God for an idol.

## **Redefining God**

In fact, “The Shack” is about redefining God. Young has said that the book is for those with “a longing that God is as kind and loving as we wish he was” (interview with Sherman Hu, Dec. 4, 2007). What he is referring to is the desire on the part of the natural man for a God who loves “unconditionally” and does not require obedience, does not require repentance, does not judge sin, and does not make men feel guilty for what they do.

In that same interview, Young said that a woman wrote to him and said that her 22-year-old daughter came to her after reading the book and asked, “IS IT ALRIGHT IF I DIVORCE THE OLD GOD AND MARRY THE NEW ONE?”

Young therefore admits that the God of “The Shack” is different from the traditional God of Bible-believing Christianity. He says that the God who “watches from a distance and judges sin” is “a Christianized version of Zeus.” This reminds me of the modernist G. Bromley Oxnam, who called the God of the Old Testament “a dirty bully” in his 1944 book “Preaching in a Revolutionary Age.”

“The Shack” explores the issue of why God allows pain and evil. It is a fictional account of a man who is bitter against God for allowing his youngest daughter to be murdered and who returns to the scene of the murder, an old shack in the woods, to have a life-changing encounter with God. The “God” that he encounters, though, is not the God of the Bible.

Young depicts the triune God as a young Asian woman named “Sarayu” \* (supposedly the Holy Spirit), an oriental carpenter who loves to have a good time (supposedly Jesus), and an older black woman named “Elousia” (supposedly God the Father). God the Father is also depicted as a guy with a ponytail and a goatee. (\* The name “Sarayu” is from the Hindu scriptures and represents a mythical river in India on the shores of which the Hindu god Rama was born.)

Young’s god is the god of the emerging church. He is cool, loves rock & roll, is non-judgmental, does not exercise wrath toward sin, does not send unbelievers to an eternal fiery hell, does not require repentance and the new birth, puts no obligations on people, doesn’t like traditional Bible churches, does not accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and does not mind if the early chapters of the Bible are interpreted as “myth.”

Note the following quotes from “The Shack” as we contrast The Shack God with the God of Scripture:



**THE SHACK GOD** - “Don’t go because you feel obligated. That won’t get you any points around here. Go because it’s what you want to do” (p. 89).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).

**THE SHACK GOD** - “I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it...” (p. 120).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (Isaiah 13:11).

**THE SHACK GOD** - “There are lots of people who think it [Eden] was only a myth. Well, their mistake isn’t fatal. Rumors of glory are often hidden inside of what many consider myths and tales” (p. 134).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

**THE SHACK GOD** - “[Your heart] is wild and beautiful and perfectly in process” (p. 138).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD** - "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

**THE SHACK GOD** - "To force my will on you is exactly what love does not do. ... True love never forces" (pp. 145, 190).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD** - "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:16).

**THE SHACK GOD** - "Our final destiny is not the picture of Heaven that you have stuck in your head--you know, the image of pearly gates and streets of gold" (p. 177).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD** - "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (Revelation 21:21).

**THE SHACK GOD** - "My church is all about people and life is all about relationships. ... You can't build it. ... I don't create institutions--never have, never will" (pp. 178, 179).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD** - "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

**THE SHACK GOD** - "Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrats, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. ... I have no desire to make them Christian" (p. 182).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD** - "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:28-29).

**THE SHACK GOD** - "Through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world ... The whole world. ... In Jesus, I have forgiven all humans for their sins against me ... When Jesus forgave those who nailed him to the cross they were no longer in his debt, nor mine" (pp. 192, 225).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD** - "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). "And the times of this ignorance

God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

**THE SHACK GOD** - “The Bible doesn’t teach you to follow rules. ... Enforcing rules, especially in its more subtle expressions like responsibility and expectation, is a vain attempt to create certainty out of uncertainty. ... That is why you won’t find the word responsibility in the Scriptures. ... because I have no expectations, you never disappoint me” (pp. 197, 203, 206).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2).

In Ephesians 4-6 alone there are at more than 80 specific rules and obligations that believers are exhorted to keep.

**THE SHACK GOD** - “I don’t do humiliation, or guilt, or condemnation” (p. 223).

**CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19). “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

### **The Shack’s God Is Emergent and New Age**

Not only is “The Shack’s” god suspiciously similar to the one described in the books of the more liberal branch of the emerging church (e.g., Rob Bell, Donald Miller, Brian McLaren), it also has a strong kinship to the New Age god promoted by Oprah Winfrey. Her gospel is that man is not a sinner, God is not a judge, all is well with the universe, and I just need to surrender to the *flow*. Her message is the celebration of self. She grew up in a traditional Baptist church, but she has reinterpreted the Bible and moved beyond its restrictions. She says, “As I study the New Age movement, it all seems to say exactly

what the Bible has said for years, but many of us were brought up with a restricted, limited understanding of what the Bible said” (“The Gospel according to Oprah,” *Vantage Point*, July 1998).

“The Shack” is another building stone of the end-times Tower of Babel.

## Denying the Imminency of Christ's Return

Another foundational error of the emerging church is its rejection of the imminency of Christ's return. This is why they can have long-range goals to save the earth, solve the AIDS problem in Africa, do away with poverty, and perform other "kingdom works" to renew society.

At the National Pastor's conference Brian McLaren said that dispensational theology is dangerous because it causes Christians not to be concerned for the earth. He said, "In theology, eschatology always wins. This is one of our theological crises. Why is there little concern about the environment? Because people are being taught that the world is going to be destroyed soon."

McLaren mocks the "fundamentalist expectations" of a literal second coming of Christ with its attendant judgments on the world and assumes that the world will go on like it is for hundreds of thousands of years (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 305). He calls the literal, imminent return of Christ "pop-Evangelical eschatology" (*Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 267) and the "eschatology of abandonment" (interview with Planet Preterist, Jan. 30, 2005, <http://planetpreterist.com/news-2774.html>).

The rejection of a pre-tribulational Rapture is a characteristic of the emerging church in all of its aspects, including the more conservative side. Mark Driscoll

refers to it as “pessimistic dispensationalism” (*Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, p. 146). He has said that eschatology-minded Christians are not welcome in his church (“Mark Driscoll Rejects McLaren but Embraces Contemplative,” Jan. 11, 2008, <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/index.php?p=931&more=1&c=1>). In the book *Confessions of a Reformissional*, Driscoll mocks the idea of the Rapture and a one-world government with an Anti-christ who makes people wear a mark to buy, sell or trade (pp. 49-50). He claims that this was not a message from Jesus but rather one ‘concocted from a cunning Serpent’”

In *The Radical Reformission*, Driscoll claims that the Rapture doctrine is evidence of the sickness of American Christians and mocks those who have the goal of leaving “this trailer park of a planet before God’s tornado touches down on all the sinners” (p. 78). He calls dispensationalists “nutty, Christian, end-times-prophecy Kaczynskis” (p. 165). [Ted Kaczynski was the “Unabomber” terrorist who murdered three people and maimed 23 others in his 18-year campaign against modern technology.]

The doctrine of judgment to come and the imminent return of Christ is not the figment of some novelist’s imagination!

The Lord Jesus Christ taught that great judgments will come upon the world (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) and that believers must be ready for His return at any time. He likened His return to the days preceding the



Flood when the people mocked Noah and ignored his warnings up to the very day that he went into the ark, and then the judgment came and the world was destroyed (Mat. 24:36-39).

Christ warned, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Mat. 24:44).

The apostle Paul taught the same thing: “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5).

James also taught it: “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:8-9).

And Peter taught it: “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Pet 4:7).

The early Christians lived in constant expectation of the Lord’s return.

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

The doctrine of a pre-tribulational Rapture is very important. It *does* matter how you interpret Bible prophecy.

First, it is a great motivator for purifying one's personal Christian life.

Second, it encourages the believer in trials and persecutions.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Third, it keeps the church's focus on the Great Commission. The imminency of Christ's return teaches us that winning people to Christ is the most urgent matter. We have been provided with a pardon for sinners in the gospel; we are ambassadors for Christ and have been given the responsibility of exhorting unbelievers to be reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:20). Evangelist D.L. Moody had it right when he said: “I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and

said to me, ‘Moody, save all you can.’” It is impossible to accomplish the great work of world evangelism while also trying to build the kingdom of God by involving ourselves in massive socio-political endeavors. There is neither the time nor resources to do both, and history shows us that when Christians try to save society (not to speak of the earth) the gospel of personal salvation gets pushed far to the back of the wagon and is soon kicked right off.

Fourth, the doctrine of the imminent Rapture keeps believers on the outlook for heresy and apostasy.

That the emerging church has rejected this doctrine is a very serious error.

## Contemplative Mysticism

Contemplative mysticism lies at the heart of the emerging church. It is a powerful bond that is drawing evangelicals together with the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church together with pagan religions like Hinduism and Buddhism and all contemplative Christian practitioners together with New Agers.

Roger Oakland observes that “wind is to a sail boat what contemplative prayer is to the emerging church” (*Faith Undone*, p. 81).

Mysticism is permeating Christianity at every level. Ursula King observes that “recent years have seen a greater interest and fascination with the mystics of all ages and faiths than any previous period in history” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 22).

Contemplative Mysticism is an attempt to commune with God experientially and to find spiritual understanding beyond the pages of the Bible, particularly by means of Roman Catholic monastic practices such as centering prayer, visualizing prayer, *Lectio Divina*, and repetitious prayers such as the Jesus prayer.

Contemplative mysticism was represented at the National Pastor’s Conference by the following books published by InterVarsity Press’s *Formatio* imprint:

“Sacred Rhythms” by Ruth Haley Barton (IVP, 2006). Chapter 3 deals with *Lectio Divina*.

“The Path of Celtic Prayer: An Ancient Way to Everyday Life” by Calvin Miller (IVP, 2007)

“Celtic Devotions” by Calvin Miller (IVP, 2008)

“Sacramental Life: Spiritual Formation through the Book of Common Prayer” by David A. DeSilva (IVP, 2008). This book does not teach Catholic contemplative mysticism as such, but it is connected with the larger world of contemplative mysticism by featuring a recommendation by the Quaker mystic Richard Foster.

“Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us” by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (IVP, 2005). It deals with contemplation, solitude, retreat, silence, and spiritual direction.

“A Community Called Taize: A Story of Prayer, Worship and Reconciliation” by Jason Brian Santos (IVP, 2003). Taize is an influential, radically ecumenical, half-Protestant, half-Catholic community in France that is led by a Catholic priest.

We have documented the spiritual danger of this practice in the new book “Contemplative Mysticism: A Powerful Ecumenical Bond.”

# **What Brought Evangelicalism to This place?**

What has brought evangelicalism to this terrible place and what must Bible-believing Baptists and fundamentalists watch out for?

The evangelical movement took a dramatic new turn fifty years ago, and we see the shocking fruit of it today. It is large, influential, and wealthy, but it is also spiritually destitute and filled with heresies.

How did evangelicalism come to the place where some of its most prominent leaders accept a novel depicting God as a non-judgmental woman?

Following are some of the things that have brought evangelicalism to this place, and these are the very things that are sweeping into many fundamentalist Bible-believing churches. As for independent Baptists in particular, they are at the same place today that the New Evangelicals were just four decades ago.

## **Shallow Evangelism and Confusion About the Gospel**

Evangelical churches are filled with nominal Christians who do not have a clear new birth testimony. At the National Pastor's Conference I asked several people when they were saved and heard the testimonies of several of the speakers, and biblical testimonies of

salvation were pathetically rare. One Lutheran pastor told me that he had always been a Christian.

In fact, the conference took its own survey along this line. Attendees were asked, “What percentage of your congregation is trying to actively live what the Bible teaches?” An overwhelming majority of the pastors, nearly 80%, replied that fewer than one-fourth of their church members are trying to obey the Bible! What is that if not a lack of biblical salvation? As the apostle Paul said, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). And the apostle John added, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).

The book “Emerging Churches” by Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger contains the testimonies of dozens of emerging church leaders. Only a few have any semblance to biblical salvation. Consider the following examples, which are typical:

Jonny Baker of Grace, London, England: “I loved God, or rather, knew I was loved by him, from an early age. I actually received the gift of tongues when I was just four years old” (p. 240).

Kester Brewin of Vaux, London, England: “I can point to a Billy Graham rally in 1984 as a conversion, but that was really more of a moment of STRENGTHENING A FAITH THAT HAD ALWAYS been there” (p. 248).

Roger Ellis of Revelation Church in Chichester, England: "In my late teens, I had a dynamic experience of God, an encounter of the Spirit at a crazy charismatic church down the road" (p. 268).

Barry Taylor of Sanctuary in Santa Monica, California: "In the end, I didn't pick Christianity. I picked Jesus instead, because Jesus seemed cool and treated people kindly. From that time I sought to follow Jesus" (p. 311).

Andy Thornton of Late Late Service in Glasgow: "When I was seventeen. I prayed a prayer, which was not a problem, because I DIDN'T REALLY SEE MYSELF AS AN UNBELIEVER. I felt something warm and affirming and quite energizing" (p. 314).

In fact, many within the emerging church have decided that salvation is not an event but a process. Shane Hipps, one of the speakers at the National Pastor's Convention, says, "... there has been an increasing acceptance of a process conception of conversion," and, "... the categories of believer and unbeliever ... are no longer used to define a target for evangelism" (Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture*, Zondervan, 2005, pp. 78, 81).

Consider Robert Webber, one of the most influential voices in the emerging church. He grew up in the home of a fundamental Baptist pastor, but the thing that is missing in his autobiographical accounts is a biblical testimony of salvation. Webber argued that salvation does not have to be a dramatic conversion experience and he admitted that he didn't have such an experience. He said that repentance "can have a dramatic beginning or can come as a result of a process over time" (*The Divine*



*Embrace*, p. 149). He came to see salvation is a sacramental process that begins at baptism, and that is one reason why he joined the Episcopalian church and was perfectly comfortable with Roman Catholicism. Webber described many experiences he had with his students at Wheaton College, but he doesn't give any examples of counseling them about personal salvation.

The purity of the gospel and personal salvation is foundational to maintaining the truth and keeping churches pure, and salvation is a supernatural birth and not a sacramental process. Those who are not saved do not have the indwelling Holy Spirit of truth and cannot properly interpret the Bible and do not have any zeal to defend it.

Fundamental Baptists are in danger here because of the Quick Prayerism technique that is so rampant. I refer to the soul winning methodology that is quick to manipulate someone into praying a prayer through salesmanship techniques even when there is no evidence of conviction and repentance and saving faith. It is then quick to give that individual assurance even though there is no evidence that he is saved. My wife and I tried to follow-up on two Quick Prayerism soul winning campaigns in past years. One church that we attended 30 years ago had a Foster Club program, and women would go out every week and return to report that some people had been "saved." The pastor asked us to follow up on these and gave us a stack of information cards, but when we attempted to do so we discovered that these "saved" people had no interest in the things of Christ and didn't

even want to talk to us! About eight years ago we followed up on decision cards that were filled out by those who prayed the sinner's prayer through a County Fair ministry. Again, of the many people who had been "saved," we could not find any that were interested in attending church or meeting with us to study the Bible. The unmistakable mark of Quick Prayerism is when only a very small percentage of a church's reported "salvations" have any biblical reality. Some argue that at least the gospel is being preached and some people are getting saved, but the fact is that people are actually being inoculated to the truth. When you meet a victim of a Quick Prayerism program and try to deal with them about the salvation of his soul, he will reply, "I have done that," even though he is still living like the devil. What he means is that he has "prayed the prayer" and been given assurance by a Quick Prayerism evangelist.

This could be a major reason why the independent Baptist movement has been shot through and through with immorality, biblical shallowness, and carnality.

Churches that are not exceedingly careful about salvation and about receiving members can become filled up with nominal Christians. In our missionary work of nearly two decades we have preached to Hindus in South Asia, and their first inclination after hearing the gospel is to try to add Jesus to their other gods and become half-Hindu, half-Christian. Since we don't want half-Hindu, half-Christians as church members, we are very careful about receiving people into membership. We deal with them patiently and carefully to try to make sure that they

understand the gospel. When they profess to have repented and put their faith in Christ and we have some confidence that their testimony is real, we put them through a baptismal class to further instruct them about the gospel and the purpose of baptism. At the end of that class, they come before the church leaders and their wives and give their testimonies. If any of the leaders have a doubt about an individual's conversion, we put off the baptism of that individual. And the process doesn't end there. On the day when we have the baptism service, the candidates stand before the whole church and give their testimonies and the church members are allowed to ask questions if there is some doubt.

The reason why we do this is to protect the churches and maintain purity in the work of God in these confused and evil days.

Keeping the gospel pure and being careful about salvation and church membership are foundational to everything else that we do.

### **The Judge Not Philosophy; Tolerance for Error; a Positive Emphasis**

Another thing that has brought the evangelical movement to its present apostasy is the judge not philosophy. When New Evangelicalism was founded after World War II, its leaders rejected the "negative" approach of the old fundamentalism. They wanted a more positive, less critical Christianity.

This, though, is a plain rejection of the Bible's command to reprove and rebuke sin and error. It is a rejection of the example of the apostles and prophets who plainly exercised this ministry. John the Baptist got his head cut off for reproofing the illicit marriage of a political leader of his day. The Lord Jesus Christ condemned the Pharisees in the severest terms (Matthew 23). The apostle Paul continually identified and condemned sin and heretics, as did Peter, James, and John.

When this type of judgment is left off, the devil is free to operate and sin and error spreads apace.

At the National Pastor's Conference in San Diego we interviewed Leighton Ford, Billy Graham's brother-in-law. I said to him that this conference represents the state of evangelicalism today and asked him if he is satisfied with where the movement has come in the past fifty years. I reminded him that there are loud voices within evangelicalism that are questioning such cardinal doctrines as the very gospel itself, substitutionary atonement, and eternal fiery hell. This was a good opportunity for him to reply, "I am very sad that we have come to this place. Those who teach error should be condemned and not praised. Brian McLaren, for example, is destroying people's faith with his heresies, and William Young is preaching a false god." Leighton Ford did not say any of that, of course. Instead, he replied, "I will not criticize others" and then brusquely cut us off when we tried to follow-up on that.

It might sound very pious not to criticize one's fellow Christians, but it is plain disobedience to God's Word, which commands us to mark them which teach contrary to apostolic doctrine and to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Romans 16:17; Jude 3).

The "I will not criticize others" philosophy is the foundational principle that has destroyed evangelicalism. Those who believe the Bible and refuse to lift up the voice against error are traitors to Jesus Christ. They enable error to grow and prosper. They are the "useful idiots" of heretics and compromisers.

When error is not clearly identified and reproved, even the preaching of the truth can become an accommodation to error. When Billy Graham has preached in Roman Catholic Churches, for example, he has preached the gospel in a vague way but has refused to identify Romanism as false and to plainly contrast Rome's gospel with the Bible's. As a result, his Catholic hearers typically believe that he is saying basically the same thing as their priests and go away lost. That is indefensible.

We witnessed this same thing at the National Pastor's Conference. Bill Hybels preached a message to that mixed multitude on "listening to God's whispers." He urged the crowd to take heed to what God tells them to do. What he said was not false and he made some good points, even giving a biblical-sounding testimony of salvation, but by pretending that his listeners were saved people who were sound in the faith and by not clearly

identifying and reproofing the heresies that were present, Hybels aided and abetted the devil and his lies. He encouraged Brian McLaren, for instance, to listen to the whispers that are telling him to deny cardinal doctrines of the faith and William Young to listen to the whispers that are telling him to redefine God.

## **Rejection of Biblical Separation**

Hand in hand with the judge-not philosophy is a rejection of biblical separation. Harold Ockenga, who claimed to have coined the term “new evangelicalism” in 1948, said, “We reject separatism.” (For documentation of this see our book “New Evangelism: Its History, Characteristics, and Fruit.”)

To reject separatism is to reject the command of God and to remove the wall of protection that God has given to protect us from the winds of error and the wiles of the devil. No wonder the evangelical movement is literally filled with doctrinal confusion. The Word of God warns, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

In this light it is frightful that there is a growing rejection of separatism among fundamental Baptists. There is a changing mood, a growing dislike for “judgmentalism.” There is growing sympathy toward New Evangelicals, whether it is Billy Graham, Anne Graham Lotz, Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, James Dobson, David Jeremiah, Kay Arthur, John Maxwell, Philip Yancey, Max Lucado, Ravi Zacharias, or a slew of others. There

is a growing non-critical relationship between the members of independent Baptist churches and syndicated Christian radio programs and bookstores such as Family Christian Bookstore and Lifeway Christian Stores, which are filled to overflowing with the New Evangelical philosophy.

(For more about this see the articles “Dangers in Christian Bookstores” and “Dangers on Christian Radio” at the Way of Life web site.)

### **Biblical Ignorance and Lack of Education in the Issues Facing Us Today**

The average member of an evangelical church is biblically ignorant and uneducated in spiritual issues. Very few could explain the nature of Rome’s sacramental gospel or the Mass. Very few are equipped to refute the errors of such grave spiritual dangers as Pentecostalism, Seventh-day Adventism, contemplative mysticism, and the New Age.

I doubt that the average member of a fundamental Bible-believing church is any better educated.

It is more imperative than ever for pastors to ground their people in God’s Word and train them to discern today’s errors. It is imperative that fundamentalist Bible Colleges and institutes prepare their students properly to resist this tide of error.

Too often it can be said of Bible-believing churches today what was said of Israel of old, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). The average member of a fundamentalist Bible-believing church is not equipped to deal effectively with the spiritual dangers that lurk on the shelves of the typical Christian bookstore and on the airwaves of the typical Christian radio station. The average church member receives little practical warning from his pastors and teachers and has no interest in building a library of material that can help protect him from spiritual dangers. If this situation is not rectified, the Brian McLarens of this world will doubtless devour many of our children and grandchildren, just as they intend to do.

### **Worldliness**

New Evangelicalism rejected separatism and has had the objective of communicating with modern culture, and it is not surprising that it has been corrupted by that communication (1 Corinthians 15:33).

By 1978, Richard Quebedeaux observed, “In the course of establishing their respectability in the eyes of the wider society, the evangelicals have become harder and harder to distinguish from other people” (“The Worldly Evangelicals,” p. 14), and, “... the wider culture has had a profound impact on the evangelical movement as a whole” (p. 115). He described how that evangelicals were “grooving on rock music,” dancing, drinking and smoking, reviewing the world’s movies, divorcing and



remarrying, using profanity, viewing pornography, even using marijuana.

There has been a capitulation to the pop culture, to the world's music, the world's gods like professional sports, the world's fashions, and the world's causes such as environmentalism, feminism, and "equality" and "civil rights" for homosexuals.

Worldliness is of the flesh and blinds spiritually. The apostle Paul exhorted us to abstain from fleshly lusts because they "war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

That which happened within evangelicalism in the 1970s is happening today among fundamental Baptists, and the result will be the same.

## **Modern Bible Versions**

The acceptance of the modern versions has weakened the authority of the Bible among evangelicals. When I attended a service at Saddleback Church a few years ago, I observed that few people carried Bibles. As I entered the building I was given a bulletin that contained an outline of the morning service with the Bible verses typed out. Several modern versions were used in that one message, so it would have been impossible to have followed along in one's own Bible, regardless of which version you brought.

In this environment a clear "thus saith the Lord" is replaced with "my version says such and such; what does

your say?” It lends itself to “sharing” and “storytelling” rather than biblical preaching.

Fundamental Baptist churches that are adopting the modern versions should look at this and not rush to disaster.

## **Contemporary Christian Music**

Contemporary Christian Music is one of the great ecumenical bonds today. The same music is used by Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, you name it. Recently while on a preaching trip to the Philippines I went into a Roman Catholic bookstore in Manila, and they were playing “evangelical” contemporary praise music.

This music is sensual (e.g., the hard rock back beat), doctrinally shallow, experience-oriented, and repetitious. It detracts from critical thinking and encourages a more emotional, broadminded approach to the faith.

And when this music comes into a fundamentalist Bible-believing church, it eventually changes everything.

The late evangelist Gordon Sears warned: “When the standard of music is lowered, then the standard of dress is also lowered. When the standard of dress is lowered, then the standard of conduct is also lowered. When the standard of conduct is lowered, then the sense of value in God’s truth is lowered.”

Ernest Pickering gave the same warning: “Perhaps nothing precipitates a slide toward New Evangelicalism more than the introduction of Contemporary Christian Music. This inevitably leads toward a gradual slide in other areas as well until the entire church is infiltrated by ideas and programs alien to the original position of the church.”

Frank Garlock says: “If a church starts using CCM it will eventually lose all other standards.”

(For documentation of these quotes see “Contemporary Christian Music: Some Questions Answered and Some Warnings Given,” which is available from Way of Life Literature.)

## **Pride of Scholarship**

There is one more thing that I want to mention that has brought evangelicalism to its present apostasy, and that is the pride of scholarship. Speaking at the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1971, Billy Graham said: “I believe that *Christianity Today* has played a major role in giving evangelicals that INTELLECTUAL RESPECTABILITY and initiative that was so drastically needed 29 years ago.”

John R.W. Stott, whose books are published by InterVarsity Press, said: “For 50 years and more, I have urged that authentic evangelical Christians are not fundamentalists. Fundamentalists tend to be ANTI-INTELLECTUAL...” (Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-*

*Evangelical Dialogue*, 1988, p. 90). The younger evangelicals in the Anglican Church, who have been influenced deeply by Stott, are on a “quest for RESPECTABLE THEOLOGY” (Iain Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, p. 175).

The quest for scholastic respectability in the eyes of apostate Christianity and the world carries men far beyond biblical simplicity and dogmatism.

Study is good and important (2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9), but pride is deadly. God warns against intellectual pride. “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2).

The apostle Paul said:

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Apostasy usually begins among would-be intellectuals. This is what brought the downfall of Harvard University in the early 19th century. In their zeal for intellectual respectability they brought in an unbelieving Unitarian renowned for his scholarship to head up the school, and it destroyed the spiritual life of the institution.

The wise Bible believer is not anti-intellectual in the sense of being anti-learning and anti-education; but he understands the dangers inherent in human scholarship because of man's fallen nature, and he is opposed to humanistic scholarship that is divorced from and antagonistic to God's Word. Faithful Bible students are not critics of God's Word.

God's people are, for the most part, common; they don't need intellectualism; they need simple and practical Bible truth. The truth has a basic simplicity that the common man can understand. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Mat. 11:25).

It is the devil who complicates things. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

The New Evangelical approach to theological scholarship has corrupted those who have pursued it. The pride of intellect is a dangerous trap. The apostle Paul warned, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). To gain impressive scholarly credentials requires sitting at the feet of and affiliating closely with unbelievers and apostates, which is exceedingly dangerous and which we are forbidden to do (Psalm 1:1-3; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 John 9-11).

Pride of scholarship is a very real danger to many independent Baptists. This is one reason why Calvinism and Reformed Theology are spreading. And it is the would-be intellectuals who are adopting the critical Greek text and the modern versions.

Indeed, the emerging church is coming to independent Baptists. It is not something “way over there.” Its destructive seeds are being sown in our very midst, and ignorance and apathy will not win the battle.

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We deal with this subject much more extensively in the book *What Is the Emerging Church?* which is available from Way of Life Literature -- [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)

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*The Emerging Church Is Coming*  
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