



Sentinel



Deception from within

Japie Grobler

"For the time will come when they (believers) will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." (2 Tim 4:3-4, NASB)

If ever a word was true, then these verses are a true reflection and warning of what is happening in the church today. Man is trying all kinds of ways and means to get people to fill the churches. Multi-media presentations, theatre-style seats and lighting and all kinds of entertaining attractions are the order of the day, because the church must give the people what they want, in many instances twisting or corrupting the Gospel, doctrine, with no or very little regard for *THE FAITH*.

In the forefront is a move under the name *Emerging Church* and its unofficial leader Brian McLaren is hailed as the brainchild of this new thing. He writes about sin, "*The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God's big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky little problem of original sin.*" (*The Last Word and the Word after That*, Jossey-Bass, 2005:134) Another prominent figure, Dan Kimball, author of *The Emerging Church* puts it this way: "*the basis of learning has shifted from logic and rational, systematic thought to the realm of experience. People increasingly long for the mystical and the spiritual rather than the evidential and facts-based faith of the modern soil.*" (Zondervan, 2003:60) There are also other names like, Leonard Sweet, Richard Foster, Rick Warren, Ken Blanchard, William Easum and Thomas Bandy among a host of others. And then there are the contemplatives who promote the occult technique of meditation, Henry Nouwen, Basil Pennington, Thomas Merton and others and of course, South Africa's own Dr Willem Nicol.

If ever anyone hit the nail on the proverbial head it was none other than Theosophist and occultist, Alice Bailey: "*The new religion is on the way, and it is one for which all previous religions have prepared us. It differs only in that it will no longer be distinguished by dogmas and doctrines, but it will be essentially an attitude of mind, an orientation to life (ala Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Life), to man and to God. It will also be a living service.... Individualism and separatedness will disappear as that kingdom comes into being. The collective consciousness is its major expression and quality.... This is the challenge which today confronts the Christian Church. The need is for vision, wisdom and that wide toler-*

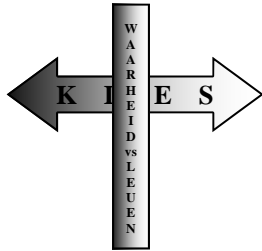
ance which will see divinity on every hand and recognize the Christ in every human being." (*From Bethlehem to Calvary*, Chapter Seven - Our Immediate Goal, The Founding of the Kingdom, <http://laluni.helloyou.ws/netnews/bk/bethlehem/beth1081.html>.)

Pure New Age!

Thomas Bandy agrees: "*...a whole new species of church is emerging*" and "*[this new emerging church] is not a machine—preoccupied with theological purity, ideological correctness and behavioral conformity [but] an organism [that] worships differently, thinks differently, and depends on an entirely different kind of leadership—[this] new species of church is the 'Spiritual Redwoods' growing in the midst of the diverse cultural forest.*" (William Easum & Thomas Bandy, *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*, Abington Press, 1997:21)

And so we find that of another growing activity, the cell church movement, Easum and Bandy write: "*Each cell is free to discover God, interpret scriptures, define doctrines, and develop ideas as they wish...They are free to...participate in any experience that helps them...deepen their*

(Continued on page 8)



'n Interkerklike Evangelisasie en Uitreik-aksie/An Interdenominational Evangelization Outreach
Sentinel is die lyfblad van **KIES** en word kwartaaliks gepubliseer om die gemeenskap in te lig en te waarsku teen misleiding, die ware Evangelie te verkondig en die Kerk bewus te maak van die gevare wat die dwaalleer van die kultes en andersins inhou. *Sentinel* is the mouthpiece of **KIES** and is published quarterly to inform and warn the community against deception, to spread the true Gospel and to alert the Church against the heresy of the cults and otherwise.
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Redaksioneel/Editorial

This Issue

Having read the books mentioned on the front page article and having weighed the information in them left no doubt in my mind that it demanded an article in *Sentinel*. The previous *Sentinel* featured Gary Gilley's part 1 of his two-part, article obtained from his website (<http://www.svchapel.org>). It comes from his latest book, ***This Little Church Stayed Home***, and was published with his permission. This edition contains part 2, also with his permission. We just had to commit to the publishing of our own article on this subject of *The Emerging Church*, the latest thing in the church, which has been ongoing for quite a while now. Like *The Purpose Driven Life* more and more churches as being influenced. (Our article is also available in tract format on request and will also be posted on our website.)

We understand that some may not fully agree with our views as the emerging movement seems to be acceptable. However, may we ask you that when something works, is it right? Please consider the information in this issue seriously.

All the books referred to in our article are available from:

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Die vorige uitgawe het u kennis gegee van die kultesbewusmakingskamp wat ons beoog. Dit sou gedurende Oktober plaas gevind het, maar weens die feit dat soveel studente met eksamens besig sal wees het ons dit goed gedink om dit te skuif na die naweek van:

23-25 Februarie 2007

Beplan nou alreeds daarvoor en bid veral dat alles flot sal verloop met ons beplanning.

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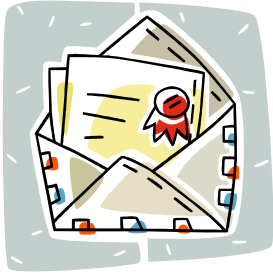
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Studying the Millennium

Thank you very much for the book "The Four Keys to the Millennium" edited by MJ Meiring. I received it about two weeks ago, and I am so happy about the fact that I'll be able to study the four views in one book.

I am still busy with "The Momentous Event" by WJ Grier and some module made out of W Hendricksen's book on Revelation, dealing with the whole book, from the 1st chapter to the last.

I've found out that I will have to put the books aside for some weeks or so, and get to study The Word of God on itself, especially to read the book of Daniel over and over again, the book of Revelation, John 5, Matt 24-25 etc over and over again, make notes etc. Oh, how fruitful the whole process is!! I am discovering things I was not aware of before, and my Bible gets more and more interesting, though sometimes the whole matter (of the Millennium) strains my mind, but after some rest, and prayer, I can begin again with much more excitement.

I am struggling to get some writing pads through from prison. I used to ask Mrs LCL to get some for me (from outside), but now she is not well, and doesn't visit us (up until she gets well. She has just lost her Mother, and it affected her so badly. Her husband is also with her, giving her all the support he can provide).

I am just asking you to help with some writing pads and pens, because I am so in need of them, as I am lousy taking notes, and I use them for other purposes (writing letters etc.) Thank you very much mr Grobler for your contribution in my spiritual growth, it means a lot to me, and for

your willingness to contribute in the spiritual lives of all other inmates around our prisons and beyond the borders. Dr Martin Holdt has encouraged me to prayerfully consider starting a prison ministry after my release. I am considering that proposal from that man of God. Would you help me in prayer for that as well?

Thank you (once again) for all your contributions, and may the good Lord bless you sir. I really appreciate it.

Name withheld (Ed.)

The study of the Millennium is certainly not an easy one, but we really trust and pray that the Holy Spirit will open the scriptures for you. It gives us great satisfaction to assist where, when and how we can.

We also look up and trust the Lord with all the arrangements and preparations for your parole release and encourage you to continue to trust in Him to guide and keep you when you venture outside prison after all the time you spent there. May you continue to run the good race and one day be awarded the "laurel wreath".

Dr Holdt's suggestion sounds like an excellent one and we will most certainly continue to think of you in our prayers for the right decision in this regard.

We sincerely trust that you will stay in contact. Ed.

Dankie nogtans!

Dankie dat u, ten spyte van my versoek om die versending (van *Sentinel*) te staak tog voortgaan om dit aan my te stuur. Die laaste artikel (*The Da Vinci Code*) is baie aktueel. Ek sal tyd maak om dit te lees.

Dankie vir die groot werk wat u doen. Ingeslote my bydrae...

Ds Deon Burgers

*Ons kon net nie daaraan dink om die pos van **Sentinel** aan u te staak nie, bloot omdat u dit versoek het weens 'n druk program en vertrou dat dit vir u steeds 'n bron van goeie inligting sal bly.*

Hou ons maar in gedagte in u gebede dat ons sal voortgaan om die Evangelie suiwer te breek en onwaarhede en misleidende leringe met eerlikheid en nederigheid te ontbloot.

Dankie vir die donasie. Red.

Hou moed!

Ek stuur t.jek___ groot___ as 'n donasie aan **KIES**. Hou moed, want ons wêreld raak elke dag nader aan die eindbestemming.

JJ Venter
Griekwastad

U donasie word opreg waardeer—ons besef hoe moeilik pensionarisse dit finansieel het. Red.

Inligting oor die ZCC

Ons is op soek na inligting oor die ZCC kerk. Ons wil dit gebruik in ons sending aksie.

By voorbaat dank
Attie Venter
Pretoria
Annlin

Trans Magalies Sending Aksie
(Per E-pos)

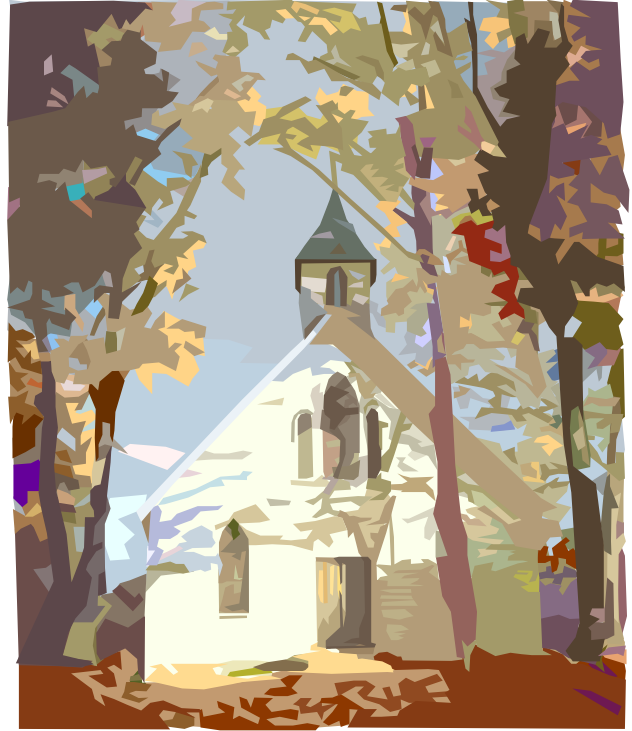
Soos per E-pos laat weet kan ons ongelukkig nie hiermee help nie. Dat dit egter 'n groep is wat navorsing verg is so en is iets wat ons sal moet aanpak. Indien iemand egter kan help met inligting kontak ons gerus. Red.

(Skrywe gerus aan ons. Dit is altyd lekker om van u te hoor, al is dit kritiek teen en oor wat ons doen en skryf/ Please do not hesitate to write to us. Your letters, even criticism are always welcome.

Red/Ed.)

The Emerging Church - Part 2

Gary Gilley: Pastor Teacher, Southview Chapel



Our worldview will determine how we process information and in turn what we believe. In theory, at least, Christians should possess a biblical worldview shaped by the study of Scripture. In actuality, too often our philosophy of living (worldview) is formed by other forces around us including our culture. This is an accusation often cast at the evangelical church by the emerging church leaders. They say that evangelicalism has been shaped by modernity – that what we believe is not drawn so much from Scripture as it is from the Enlightenment. This indictment should not be cast aside too quickly; there is some truth to it. We must ever be careful that we trace our beliefs to Scripture and not take detours constructed by men. But having read the specific allegations coming from the emerging camp, I find that most do not hold water and are

thrown out more to put us on the defensive and justify their beliefs than to accurately portray the teachings of the conservative church. When the smoke has cleared we discover that our fundamental doctrines find their basis in Scripture after all. But the same cannot be said for emergent teachings. Their doctrines have been more than tainted; they have been fashioned by postmodernity. Let's take a look through the lens of emergent philosophy at some of the major doctrines.

Emergent Doctrine

In General

Al Mohler, theologian and president of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, provides this scathing comment:

The worldview of postmodernism – complete with an epistemology that denies the possibility of or need for propositional truth – affords the movement an opportunity to hop, skip and jump throughout the Bible and the history of Christian thought in order to take whatever pieces they want from one theology and attach them, like doctrinal post-it notes, to whatever picture they would want to draw.^[1]

Most emergent church leaders claim fidelity to the Scriptures as well as the historic doctrines and even creeds of the church. Sounds good on the surface – but then they force these things through the filter of postmodern deconstruction and what comes out are distorted and unrecognizable understandings of theology. Dan Kimball says that the church must “deconstruct, reconstruct, and redefine biblical

terms.”^[2] Brian McLaren would agree, saying that our old theological systems are flawed and something new is needed.

I meet people along the way who model for me, each in a different way, what a new kind of Christian might look like. They differ in many ways, but they generally agree that the old show is over, the modern jig is up, and it's time for something radically new.... Either Christianity itself is flawed, failing, untrue, or our modern, Western, commercialized, industrial strength version is in need of a fresh look, a serious revision.^[3]

Rob Bell chips in to make certain we understand that these men are talking about more than methodology, “By this I do not mean cosmetic, superficial changes like better lights and music, sharper graphics, and new methods with easy-to-follow steps. I mean theology: the beliefs about God, Jesus, the Bible, salvation, the future. We must keep reforming the way the Christian faith is defined, lived and explained.”^[4]

How far is Bell willing to take all of this? Which doctrines can be changed, altered or even eliminated before we no longer have the Christian faith? Apparently nothing is off limits. While personally claiming to affirm historic Christian theology, Bell writes that it would not bother him to discover that we have been wrong all along concerning the basic elements of the faith. For example, if it could be proven “that Jesus had a real, earthly, biological father named Larry... and that the virgin birth was just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in.... Could you still be a Christian?”^[5] Bell doesn't see a problem. As a matter of fact, if our faith depends on such doctrines “then it wasn't that strong in the first place, was it?”^[6]

What doctrines does Bell regard as dispensable? In this brief statement alone he sees as superfluous the virgin birth, the incarnation, the hypostatic union of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture (since the Gospel writers lied about the person of Christ). Of course, like dominos, as these doctrines fall they take others with them, not the

least of which would be the substitutionary atonement since a mere man could not die for our sins. In one stroke of the pen Bell has undermined the whole Christian faith, but he sees it as a non-issue. To Bell, and other emergent leaders, Jesus is not the way and the truth, if by that we mean He is the embodiment of truth and the only way to God. No, to these men the “way of Jesus is the best possible way to live.”^[7] We could continue to live the “Christian life” without the truth of Scripture. We could still love God and be a Christian, because what we believe is not important. The only question is, “Is the way of Jesus still the best possible way to life?”^[8] It is not about what we believe, Bell would insist. “Perhaps a better question than who’s right, is who’s living rightly?”^[9]

McLaren reinforces this major tenant of emergent “theology:” “We place less emphasis on whose lineage, rites, doctrines, structures, and terminology are right and more emphasis on whose actions, service, outreach, kindness, and effectiveness are good.”^[10] “A turn from doctrines to practices”^[11] is one of the four major legs that the emerging church stands on, according to McLaren. Being, rather than believing, is a major component in the emergent philosophy. The New Testament, on the other hand, does not sacrifice one for the other. We are called in Scripture to live godly lives, but first we must believe (John 1:12; Roman 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9). Christlike living is a fruit of salvation, not the cause. We can “be” moral and decent people and not be Christians, but we cannot deny or ignore the true historic, biblical person and work of Jesus Christ and be saved. The emergent church has turned this truth on its head. Mark Oestreicher, president of Youth Specialties, makes these comments in *The Emerging Church* which are not only dangerously close to a denial of the gospel itself but actually cross the line:

Does a little dose of Buddhism thrown into a belief system somehow kill off the Christian part? My Buddhist cousin, except for her unfortunate inability to embrace Jesus, is a better “Christian” (based

on Jesus’ descriptions of what a Christian does) than almost every Christian I know. If we are using Matthew 26 as a guide, she’d be a sheep; and almost every Christian I know personally would be a goat.^[12]

A Few Specifics

The doctrine of God: Even though Jesus has come to reveal and explain the Father (John 1:14, 18), “God,” McLaren insists, “can’t ever really be an object to be studied.”^[13] To emergent leaders theology is not a matter of knowing God but a quest for beauty and truth.

The doctrine of original sin: McLaren writes, “Many of us have grown uneasy with this understanding of ‘the fall’ (and with it an exaggerated understanding of the doctrine of ‘original sin’). We are suspicious that it has become a kind of Western Neo-Platonic invasive species that ravages the harmonious balance inherent in the enduring Jewish concepts of creation as God’s world.”^[14]

The substitutionary atonement: One of the characters in McLaren’s book *The Story We Find Ourselves In* goes beyond questioning the purpose and need of Christ’s death for us, or even the unfairness of one dying for others. “That just sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse. You know?”^[15]

The TULIP: You don’t have to be a Calvinist to find McLaren’s deconstruction of the famous TULIP ridiculous. The acronym has historically stood for total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. McLaren says he too is a Calvinist but he comes up with his own TULIP: Triune love, unselfish election, limitless reconciliation, inspiring grace and passionate, persistent saints.^[16]

When deconstructing and reconstructing takes place at this level it is not hard to understand the difficulty involved in communication. As Al Mohler wrote recently on his

blog, McLaren claims to uphold “consistently, unequivocally and unapologetically” the historic creeds of the church, specifically the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. At the same time, however, he denies that truth should be articulated in propositional form, and thus undercuts his own “unequivocal” affirmation.^[17]

The doctrine of hell

So odious is the doctrine of hell to the emergent community that McLaren devoted his latest book, *The Last Word and the Word After That*, to the subject. McLaren introduces his subject with an exaggerated distortion of the evangelical position, *God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, and if you don’t love God back and cooperate with God’s plans in exactly the prescribed way, God will torture you with unimaginable abuse, forever* – that sort of thing. Human parents who ‘love’ their children with these kinds of implied ultimatums tend to produce the most dysfunctional families...^[18] (emphasis his).

If the idea of hell is so ridiculous then why did Jesus teach it? McLaren concocts a fanciful view that the Jews during the intertestamental period wove together the mythological views of the Mesopotamian, the Egyptian, the Zoroastrian and Persian religions and created hell. When Jesus came on the scene the Pharisees were using hell as a club to keep the people in line. Through the threat of hell the Pharisees could motivate sinners to stop sinning and then perhaps God would send the Messiah along with His kingdom. Jesus takes the Pharisees’ club and turns it on them. Jesus didn’t really believe in or endorse hell, as we understand it; He just used it as a “truth-depicting model.”^[19] Jesus used hell “to threaten those who excluded sinners and other undesirables, showing that God’s righteousness was compassionate and merciful, that God’s kingdom welcomed the undeserving, that for God there was no out-group.”^[20]

This convoluted argumentation leads to there being “no out-group.” If there is no out-group, does that

mean McLaren is a universalist? While he flirts with this possibility stating, “Universalism is not as bankrupt of biblical support as some suggest,”^[21] he never firmly lights on it.^[22] But without question McLaren does hold to the doctrine of inclusivism which teaches that while salvation has been made possible by Jesus Christ, it is not necessary to know who Jesus is or the precise nature of what He has done.^[23] Emergent church leaders follow the reasoning of missionary theologian Lesslie Newbigin’s position concerning Christ and salvation which runs along these lines: Exclusive in the sense of affirming the unique truth of the revelation of Jesus Christ, but not in the sense of denying the possibility of salvation to those outside the Christian faith; inclusive in the sense of refusing to limit the saving grace of God to Christian, but not in the sense of viewing other religions as salvific.^[24] In other words, salvation is not exclusively found in the gospel, therefore there are saved Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and so forth. Soon hell becomes a mute issue because no one seems to be going there anyway.

The doctrine of salvation

The doctrine of hell is determined to a large degree by the all-important understanding of the gospel. The emergent leaders see a wide gate opening to eternal life. “It bothers me to use *exclusive* and *Jesus* in the same sentence. Everything about Jesus’ life and message seemed to be about inclusion, not exclusion,”^[25] writes McLaren (emphasis his). He adds later in his discussion, “Maybe God’s plan is an opt-out plan, not an opt-in one. If you want to stay out of the party, you can. But it’s hard for me to imagine somebody being more stubbornly ornery than God is gracious.”^[26] The clear implication is that we are all “in” unless we want “out.” But the next question is (and this is where it gets tricky) in or out of what? The short answer is “the kingdom of God.” But the short answer leads to a long explanation that leaves us scratching our heads (which is appropriate since the emergent people prize mystery over clarity).

The gospel, according to the emergent thinkers, is not about individual conversion. It is not about how to get people “in.” It is about “how the world will be saved from human sin and all that goes with it...”^[27] This sounds close to the mark until we examine more thoroughly what is meant by the terminology. Their concept of “world” does not simply involve humans who don’t believe in Christ. The emergent gospel is not just bringing unbelievers to the Savior for the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of God’s righteousness. There is more, as Rob Bell informs us, Salvation is the entire universe being brought back into harmony with its maker. This has huge implications for how people present the message of Jesus. Yes, Jesus can come into our hearts. But we can join a movement that is as wide and as big as the universe itself. Rocks and trees and birds and swamps and ecosystems. God’s desire is to restore all of it.^[28]

McLaren continues the thought: “Is getting individual souls into heaven the focal point of the gospel? I’d have to say no, for any number of reasons. Don’t you think that God is concerned about saving the whole world?... It is the redemption of the world, the stars, the animals, the planets, the whole show.”^[29] You see, “The church exists for the world – to be God’s catalyst so that the world can receive and enter God’s kingdom more and more.”^[30] When asked to define the gospel, Neo (the main philosophical character in McLaren’s novels) replies that it could not be reduced to a little formula, other than “the Kingdom of God is at hand.”^[31] Narrowing this definition is not easy, but McLaren gives some insight when he writes, I am a Christian because I believe that, in all these ways, Jesus is saving the world. By the “world” I mean planet Earth and all life on it, because left to ourselves, un-judged, un-forgiven, and un-taught, we will certainly destroy this planet and its residents.^[32]

As we are discovering, the emerg-

ing church is very concerned with the planet, with the ecosystems, pollution and the environment; so much so that apparently in some sense Christ died for the physical planet and it is the job of the follower of Christ to help restore and protect this world. He is also troubled with injustice. McLaren asks, “And could our preoccupation with individual salvation from hell after death distract us from speaking prophetically about injustice in our world today?”^[33] Emergent leaders have a deep concern that if we are preoccupied with who is “in” and who is “out,” who is going to heaven and who is not, we will ignore present physical needs of the planet and social issues like injustice, poverty and AIDS.

McLaren argues, “When Matthew, Mark, and Luke talk about the Kingdom of God, it’s always closely related to social justice.... The gospel of the kingdom is about God’s will being done on earth for everybody, but we’re interested in getting away from earth entirely as individuals, and into heaven instead.”^[34] Martin Luther King is given by McLaren as an example of one who had the right gospel emphasis.^[35] They fault the evangelical church for being too wrapped up in eternity to care about what is happening right now on planet earth and with being too anxious over who is saved from sin to notice who is suffering from man’s inhumanity to man.

It does not seem to be an option to the emergent church that both social injustices and eternal redemption can be and have been attended to by God’s people. But, despite opinions to the contrary, the priority of Scripture is on man’s relationship to God. It is because men are alienated from God that they mistreat one another. The spiritually redeemed and transformed person should and will care about social sins. But, again, the gospel is about man’s alienation from God and what He has done through Christ to reconcile us to Himself (Romans 5:6-11), not about the ozone layer and elimination of poverty. Neither Jesus nor the apostles made these latter things the focus of their ministries; it was the reconciliation of souls to God

that was at the heart of their message. Once we begin to draw our gospel from the culture, no matter what culture that might be, we have altered the true gospel. Emergent leaders are not wrong to be concerned about the environment and social injustice; they are wrong to confuse it with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(Part 1 published in *Sentinel 2006-2* and Part 2 in this edition were adapted from Gary's new book *This Little Church Stayed Home*, available through his site. An excellent read is also his previous book, *This Little Church Went To Market*, locally available from 011-425-2938)

Notes:

- [1] Quoted by David Roach, "Leaders Call 'Emerging Church Movement' a Threat to Gospel," BP News, March 23, 2005, (<http://www.svchapel.org/Resources/Articles/www.ews.net/bpnews.asp?id=20420>).
[2] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*,

- (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p. 178.
[3] Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), pp. XIV-XV.
[4] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2005), p. 12.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 20 (cf. p. 21).
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[10] Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004), p. 223.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[12] Kimball, p. 53.
[13] McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, p. 161.
[14] McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 235.
[15] Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), p. 102.
[16] McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, pp. 195-197.
[17] Al Mohler, (<http://www.svchapel.org/Resources/Articles/www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler/?adate=2/16/2005#1313087>).
[18] Brian McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word After That*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), p. XII.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-64, 71-79.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 103 (cf. pp. 182-183).
[22] McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p.

37.
[23] McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word After That*, p. 182.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 183.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[28] Bell, pp. 109-110.
[29] McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, p. 129.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[32] McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 97.
[33] McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word After That*, p. 84.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 149. McLaren has adopted N.T. Wright's understanding of the gospel which is termed the New Perspective. The New Perspective says that we have misunderstood the New Testament and that the real issue of such books as Romans is not to explain the gospel but how to bring Jews and Gentile together in the Kingdom of God (see pp. 149-153).
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<http://www.svchapel.org>

An Open Letter to Neale Donald Walsch

by Bill Randles

September 11, 2002

You have come to my attention through your contribution to the book *From the Ashes: A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America*. Since that time I have had the opportunity to read some of your other works, such as *Conversations with God*, and *Honest to God*, in which you make the following assertion about the spiritual demands of the day in which we live:

*But this is a new time and a new day and we need a new way. I've been saying that part of what we need is a new God. This is shaking people up a little bit.*¹

In *From the Ashes* you have also asserted that we ministers should be preaching a "new gospel". In fact you challenged every minister, priest, rabbi and cleric in the land to preach this new message:

We must change ourselves. We must change beliefs upon which our behaviors are based. We must create a different reality, build a new society. . . . We must do so with new spiritual truths. We must preach a new gospel, its healing message summarized in two sentences:

*Ours is not a better way, ours is merely another way.*²

This 15 minute message, delivered from every lectern and pulpit, from every rostrum and platform could change everything overnight. I challenge every priest, every minister, every rabbi and religious cleric to preach this.

I have also found that you, Marianne Williamson, and your other friends at your Global Renaissance Alliance are aspiring to bring this "new gospel" into politics. I am writing you to let you know why I reject your "new gospel," and why I would hope that other Christian ministers would do likewise. It should be obvious to your readers that your "God" is not the Holy, Infinite, personal God of the Bible. For example you quote your "God" as saying:

*There are no such things as the Ten Commandments.³
You are already a God. You simply do not know it.*⁴

Mr. Walsch, have you ever read the story of the serpent (Satan) lying to Adam and Eve in the garden? There is nothing at all "new" about your gospel! Your God's gospel is the same as that of the serpent's! "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," (Genesis 3:5) is the primal lie that has damned the human race!! It is also obvious that much of your inspiration comes from A Course in Miracles, which your "God" claims to have inspired. The same spirit which would deify man, as a consequence, is inimically hostile to the cross of Jesus Christ. As the "Jesus" of A Course in Miracles asserts:

*The journey to the cross should be the last "useless journey."*⁵

And also:

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 1)

faith." (*Redwoods* :148-149, emphasis added.) Interpretation of doctrine can thus be decided by the individual, hence theology becomes flexible: "Spiritual Redwoods allow enormous scope for individual interpretations of doctrine, contextual perspectives in theology, and personal definitions of faith..." (*Redwoods* :120) And so *THE FAITH* goes out the window.

So individual's experience in *The Emerging Church-movement* overrides the centuries old doctrines, scriptural truth—the things the apostles and martyrs of the Reformation died for. "Relationship with Jesus is experiential. The experience of the transforming power of God precedes any rational statement of faith, and acceptance of some stated dogma does not function as a gate through which one must pass to gain access to that grace. Relationship with Jesus is a matter not of intellectual conversion and agreement with correct propositional statements, but of personal transformation and evidence of a change in behavior. Wherever personal transformation occurs, in whatever form and in whatever context, there is an opportunity to discern Jesus. Therefore, the point of interfaith conversation is not to decide which religious propositions are right or wrong, but to build connections between one's own experience of the divine and the experiences of others." (*Growing Spiritual Redwoods* :54-55, emphasis added.)

Dr Rick Warren endorses this book as we read on the back cover: "Every passage of this book contains nuggets of truth that can help your church to grow healthy and strong." (Emphasis added.)

Spirituality replaces religion. "... people do not want to talk about religion; they do want to talk about spirituality!... The religion 'Church Folks' want to discuss is a body of correct information and acceptable behavior with which they want others to agree and conform. The 'spirituality' about which people want to talk is an attitude or orientation to daily living, and perspective from anyone is equally welcome." (*Redwoods* :37, emphasis added.)

Spirituality brings universal agreement: "All people do not hold the same religious beliefs. And, in fact, not all people even participate in religion or church, in any form. Spirituality, on the other hand, is universal. All people participate in it. All people agree with it.... This is because 'spirituality' is nothing more than life itself, as it is." (Neale Donald Walsch, *Friendship With God: An Uncommon Dialogue*, GP Putnam's Sons, 1999:376-377, emphasis added.)

There are so many distortions of the truth that it just serves to illustrate that truth has become relative. God's truth is no longer ultimate. Gary Gilley so aptly writes on page 148: "Experience, not Scripture, becomes the basis for truth... There is no absolute truth or ultimate reality in the emergent agenda. Even Scripture is appreciated for its mystery, not its presentation of truth... The emergent church leaders are asking us to embrace a faith without truth, a Bible which has value due to its mystery, and a reality that is individual, subjective and changeable. This is touted as a new and improved version of Christian living." He then brings perspective with these words: "The church is not free to create truth, to supplement truth, to alter truth or to selectively obey truth. The church is 'to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict' (Titus 1:9). The church is to 'contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 9). The church is to 'preach the word; be ready, in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction' (2 Tim 4:2) To not accept these commands as a sacred trust is to totally miss the most important reason for the church's existence." (*This Little Church Stayed Home*, Evangelical Press, 2006:16-17.)

Doctrine is out! Mysticism, contemplation, experiences and what the people want are in! How different to what an infant church in Jerusalem did (See Acts ch 2). "[W]hat was important to them [was], 1.) Evangelism (41,47); 2.) Worship (46-47); 3.) Prayer (42); Truth (42); Baptism & Communion (41,42); Purity (5:1-16). [These] newly regenerated people, with no money, no buildings and no program [had] an astounding impact on their world in a very short time." (*This Little Church Stayed Home* :16)

Religion divides! And we cannot have that—we must live in peace with all and even love all, so let us tolerate the heretics. But did Jesus Christ not say? "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matt 10:34, NASB)

Do we not reject a R100,00 or even R10,00 note even if it is a perfect forgery, except for one minute error—the forger for instance left the "i" out of the President (Mbowen(i)) of The Reserve Bank's signature? Does this not make the whole note false? Yet we tolerate false religious teachers and try to extract some truth from their heretical doctrines and teachings. Why? So, instead of paying any

attention to the men mentioned in this article and other false teachers, should we not rather heed Paul's warning: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30, NASB)

The following books are worth reading as they hopefully will bring some sanity in this time of confusion:

About *This Little Church Went To Market*: "In an effort to draw sellout crowds, is the modern Church in danger of selling out? This is the question author and pastor Gary E. Gilley addresses in [this book]. He believes that under pressure from secular philosophies and fads, many evangelical churches have subscribed to pragmatic rather than scriptural patterns for ministry.

"Marketing tactics, demographic analyses and entertainment-orientated worship have taken the new paradigm Church by storm. The result is a Christian community which is rapidly losing its focus and forfeiting its biblical mandate. [This book] is a call for the church to return to its scriptural roots." (Back cover.)

About *This Little Church Stayed Home*: "Many churches, riding the faddish waves of our times, have 'gone to market', but not all. Some churches are trying to 'stay home', that is, remain firmly grounded in the Scriptures. Still, the pressures mount, the temptations are repackaged, and the schemes of the world become more and more persuasive.

"In [this book], Dr Gilley explores the manifold pressures of conservative churches to sell out to modern trends and innovations, including the present temptation towards mystical theology. Churches toying with 'new measures' will be challenged to remain true to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith and remain faithful to God's chosen means of converting sinners to himself: the good news of Jesus Christ." (Back cover.)

Research analyst, author and speaker, Ray Yungen, in his book *A Time Of Departing*, gives "a revealing account of a universal spirituality that has infiltrated the church today. This book exposes subtle strategies to compromise the gospel message with Eastern mystical concepts cloaked under wrappings of contemplative prayer and the silence." (Back cover.)

Listen to Dr Keith MacGregor of MacGregor Ministries (Canada): "Sadly, many pastors

are oblivious to the unbiblical concepts promoted within their churches. *A Time of Departing* clearly shows how [New Age] spiritual deception is being introduced into the church. A must read for all pastors and teachers who want to protect their churches from deception."

Who is more capable to warn against the infiltration of New Age and Eastern mysticism of the church than an Ex-New Ager? Brian Flynn is such a man as he has been down this deceptive road before he was saved by the True Light—Jesus Christ.

About his book, ***Running Against The Wind***. "As a kid, Brian Flynn hated going to church. So when his father announced to the family one day they were through with church, Brian couldn't have been more delighted. From there, Brian experimented with Ouija boards and Tarrot cards. After time in the Air Force, he became consumed with the occult. In time, he developed his skill for Transcendental Meditation and eventually had his own spirit guides.

"Through a series of events in his life, Brian was radically saved out of darkness, only to find that some of the same practices he experienced as a medium were being introduced into the Christian church as forms of legitimate meditation and spirituality. ***Running Against The Wind*** is a relevant and crucial warning against New Age and Eastern spirituality that has entered the church through practices such as lectio divina, labyrinths contemplative prayer and more." (Back cover.)

Do these things really happen? Can your church fall for this modern thing called ***The Emerging Church?*** You bet! Listen to Paul Proctor as he describes his personal experience:

"I walked through the doors of The First Baptist Church in the spring of 1995 after having been somewhat of a prodigal son for roughly 10 years. I had recently rededicated my life to Christ and wanted to once again be a part of a loving church family. As I entered and sat down to the joyful noise of a magnificent choir and orchestra praising God in song, my heart and soul were filled with wonder, excitement and great expectation. I was truly being prepared for worship.

"When the preacher finished his sermon, I was spiritually refreshed and energized for the week ahead. His message had been clear, powerful, convicting, biblical and full of the Holy Spirit. Over time I grew to love this brother in Christ because of his faithfulness and passion for the gospel. After visiting the church for some months, I knew I had found a church home.

"A couple of years later, the pastor invited me to lunch at a nearby country club he frequented where he mentioned in passing his desire to eventually do away with the First Baptist Church name and simply call it 'The People's Church', claiming 'that's what everyone called it anyway'. Still taken by the man's persona, I smiled and nodded in approval as he told me of wanting to take the church in 'a new direction', away from the Southern Baptist stigma that he felt had somehow hindered us in the past and move on to greater things. Unfortunately, he didn't elaborate on what that 'new direction' was and I mistakenly assumed that he meant toward a non-denominational identity.

"In the coming weeks and months a new message began emanating from his pulpit...A re-occurring theme of 'tolerance, diversity and unity' seemed to permeate almost every sermon. It became increasingly clear to me that the pastor's 'new direction' was worldly and that he was now being guided by someone or something other than God. Friction grew between the two of us over the course of time as his sermons turned away from the gospel that leads to repentance and faith in Christ to the social psychology of get-alongism. Sure, the Bible calls us to live in peace with one another, to keep and maintain healthy relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but NOT at the expense of God. The pastor I once held in such high regard began reciting 'group-think' platitudes like: 'YOU CAN'T BE RIGHT WITH GOD AND AT ODDS WITH EVERYONE ELSE', meaning it was now time for us all to compromise our conscience and convictions for the collective. This is the 'Consensus Process' at work, a 200 year-old socialist brainwashing technique known by social psychologists the world over as the 'Hegelian Dialectic', developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in the late 1700's that involves the practice of compromise to achieve social harmony between opposing groups and/or belief systems. The 'Hegelian Dialectic' is especially damaging to those of the faith who are compelled by the process to accept the unacceptable in order to gain the approval of the group. It is the herd mentality of humanist thinking and an abomination before God..."

Paul researched Bill Hybels' Willow Creek church movement, which influenced Rick Warren and his Saddleback church which in turn affected thousands of churches around the world. This is what he has to say: "As I went on to research *The Willow Creek Association*, I discovered that thousands upon thousands of established

churches around the country were being transformed into sensory driven 'seeker churches' EXACTLY like ours under the guidance and direction of this organization, all with the same tolerance, diversity and unity theme, liberal worship format, scripturally shallow teaching, heavy on the comfort and light on the conscience, equipped with huge multi-media projection screens, large sound systems, exotic music, no choir, female ministers, feelings-motivated skits, dance interpretations and heavily burdened with millions of dollars of debt from building state-of-the-art entertainment venues they call 'worship centers'.

"I have long-since worn out my welcome with certain members of the church staff by repeatedly protesting our involvement in these ecumenical movements and carnal extravaganzas beginning with the 'men's movement'; that emotionally driven, highly advertised, celebrity endorsed, spiritually misguided and now financially bankrupt organization known as 'Promise Keepers'. The 'Consensus Process' or 'Hegelian Dialectic' teaches 'facilitators' to isolate, intimidate and even shame their critics into silence and cooperation with 'hurt feelings' as their license and authority. This too is carnal. Those seeking group acceptance and approval are powerless against it. Frankly, I'd much rather have God's acceptance and approval than the herd's. You see *The Willow Creek Association* [and many others today] always emphasizes 'felt needs', unity, harmony, peace and human relationships over everything else...Just like the United Nations. But, that's not the Gospel." (<http://www.newswithviews.com>)

All the above books and the following ones are available from: The Berean Call/Discernment Ministries, Suite 368, Private Bag X043, BENONI 1500. Tel: 011-425-2938.

Other books that can be considered for studying so as to get a more complete overview of the various influences are:

The New Wine and Babylonian Vine, Roger Oakland, Understand The Times, 2002.

The Inter-Faith Movement: The New Age Enters The Church, Herbert J Pollitt, The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1996.

The Seduction Of Christianity, Dave Hunt & TA McMahon, Harvest House Publishers, 1985.

The New Spirituality, Dave Hunt & TA McMahon, Harvest House Publishers, 1988.

Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church: Dave Hunt, Harvest House Publishers, 1998.

Vengeance Is Ours: The Church In Dominion, Al Dager, Sword Publishers, 1990.

(Continued from page 7)

*Do not make the pathetic error of "clinging to the old rugged cross."*⁶

Finally, this false gospel promoted by this so-called Course in Miracles:

*The atonement is the final lesson he [man] need learn, for it teaches him that, never having sinned, he has no need of salvation.*⁷

It is no wonder that in your "God's" scheme of things Hitler is in heaven!⁸ Hitler, of course never sinned, as your "God" doesn't believe in sin. Hitler made "mistakes."

*The mistakes Hitler made did no harm or damage to those whose deaths he caused. Those souls were released from their earthly bondage, like butterflies emerging from a cocoon.*²

Incredibly you go on to assert that, "Hitler didn't hurt anyone."¹⁰

I may be the first minister to alert you to this. (I hope not). But with all due respect, Mr. Walsch, you are bringing a false gospel, more in keeping with what we are warned of in the New Testament as being of the "spirit of anti-christ" than of God. I am sure you are very well intentioned but sincerity is not substitute for discernment. "Try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). You, the "new gospel" promoters of A Course in Miracles, your Global Renaissance Alliance, and every other practitioner of any spirituality which deifies man, are not of God but of the spirit of anti-Christ .

The Word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man say unto the prince of Tyrus, thus saith the Lord God; because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God. (Ezekiel 28-1-2).

Mr. Walsch, the Bible warns us that "false christs and false prophets" would arise, bringing deceptive signs and wonders to verify their false teachings. All of this would come in the midst of a time marked by "wars and rumours of wars". (Matthew 24:6, 24:24) You have boldly challenged me and other Christian ministers to accept your "new gospel." Do you not realize that your deification of man, and validation of all religions is the "broad way" Jesus warned of that ends in death and destruction for all who are on it (Matthew 7:13-15)? Rather than deny my calling by proclaiming your "new gospel," I will do what I can to warn people to beware of you, Marianne Williamson, and your Global Renaissance Alliance.

Salvation does not come by discovering our supposed godhood, (what kind of god has to be reminded that he is god?). Salvation comes the opposite way, by letting go of false claims to be as gods, and taking our place again as created beings under God. Man can never become God, but God has become a man, in the person of Jesus, that he might take our place in judgment for our sins. I am firmly convinced that there is coming a huge religious test for the whole world, and that with eternal consequences. It is a choice between two gospels: either your "new gospel" of

human deification, called "the mystery of iniquity" in 2 Thessalonians 2, or the true Gospel, the "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16), that the true God became a man to save us from our sin. I ask you to consider what I am saying here. There can be no true "new gospel", only a counterfeit one. There can be no new "Christ", only an anti-Christ.

Sincerely,

Pastor Bill Randles

cc: Billy Graham; T. D. Jakes; Charles Colson; Max Lucado; Bill Hybels; Jerry Jenkins; Bruce Wilkinson

P.S. I am sending carbon copies of this letter to the Christian leaders who allowed their articles to be published along with yours. I will be asking them also to openly renounce your "new gospel" challenge. Chuck Colson, Billy Graham, T. D. Jakes and others have unfortunately lent credibility to your "new gospel" which is in fact a denial of Jesus Christ. Hopefully these Christian leaders will emphatically distance themselves from endorsing, or appearing to endorse, your "new gospel."

For more information on this subject and the Global Renaissance Alliance read: REINVENTING JESUS CHRIST: The New Gospel by Warren Smith (\$7.00 Plus \$1.50 shipping)

This letter and the book mentioned above is distributed by:

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West Lafayette, IN 47996

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Endnotes:

1 Neale Donald Walsch, Honest to God: A Change of Heart That Can Change the World, (Stanley, VA: Sparrowhawk Publications 2002) p. 202

2 Beliefnet, Inc. From the Ashes: A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America, (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Pub., 2001)

3 Neale Donald Walsch, Conversations with God: an uncommon dialogue, Book 1, (NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), p. 95

4 Neale Donald Walsh, Conversations with God: an uncommon dialogue, Book 3 (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Pub. Co., Inc. 1996), p. 202

5 Foundaton for Inner Peace, A Course in Miracles, Text, (Glen Ellen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992), p. 52

6 Ibid

7 A Course in Miracles, Text. P. 237

8 Conversations with God: an uncommon dialogue, Book 1, p 61

9 Ibid, Book 2, p. 42

10 Ibid, p. 56