

Emergent Church: Biblical Authority

2 Timothy 2:2-4

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.

The New Downgrade “No-Controversy”

In this text we read that doctrine which was taught *in the presence of many witnesses is then to be entrusted to other reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others*. And further God the Holy Spirit instructs us that we are to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3, *NKJV*). This would seem to be an impossible task if we were not going to be able to understand what this doctrine was in the first place taught *in the presence of many witness* and then given to other reliable men to teach. Yet this is what the leaders in the Emergent Church would try and have us believe; as if the idea of *Sola Scriptura* was simply “invented” by the Reformers when they were forced at the risk of their very lives to break away from the apostate Church of Rome, but history shows this isn’t the case at all. I find it interesting that this is the very same Roman Catholic Church that the Emergent Church appears rather anxious to reemerge with.

Think for a moment, initially the Reformers were trying to change the corrupt Church of Rome from the inside but we need to stop and consider why these courageous men felt moved to do so? Was it because the Roman Catholic Church really *was* teaching what is right and proper concerning this aforementioned doctrine taught in front of many reliable eyewitness which was then entrusted to other reliable men to teach? Obviously not; and those who cannot see the mighty hand of God in the Reformation are simply spiritually blind. And who were these reliable men spoken of in our above text? Could they have been part of the gifts that Christ would give His Church according to Ephesians chapter 4, and just what was their function to be? You can look for yourself:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (vv.11-15)

You see the witness of history clearly shows many men of God who were faithful to teach exactly what the Bible says, and this just can’t be disregarded as easily as these men so caught up in the relativism of postmodern skepticism in the Emergent Church movement would try and have you believe. The basic flaw of this developing cult within orthodox Christianity stems from their erroneous premise that we can’t really know what this proper doctrine was/is that has always been taught by reliable men called of Christ, many of whom would pay for their teachings with their very lives. And exactly what do these modern vipers in this whole satanic

seeker sensitive Church Growth movement – *hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron* (see–1 Timothy 4:2) – themselves have to worry about as they stand behind Evangelical pulpits as wolves in sheep’s clothing brazenly teaching undiscerning Evangelical leaders to distrust God’s Word? Well, basically nothing more than a soft whimper of disagreement from these influential though timorous men privately expressed from the sanctity of their offices in what is apparently the New Downgrade No-Controversy. However, I ask you, is this how Charles Haddon Spurgeon, whom these same men profess to admire so, handled the liberals in the first “Downgrade Controversy” within the apostatizing Baptist Union of his day?

But here’s where the argument posed by the reemerging cult of liberal theology in the Emergent Church for the rejection of the inerrancy of Holy Scripture is destroyed. God tells us in Psalm 119:89 that we are to say – *Your word, O LORD, is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens, and then in verse 91 – Your laws endure to this day.* Further the Bible teaches us that God is – *the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgement: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he* (Deuteronomy 32:4, **KJV**). Next 1 Timothy 3:16 informs us – *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* And then 2 Peter 1:20-21 says – *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

You see – *All Scripture is God-breathed, He is a God of Truth, His Word is eternal, and the Lord’s work is perfect.* So the key question we have to ask ourselves then is: Why did the Lord tell us these things? Was it so that we’d understand that Holy Scripture was to be the absolute infallible and inerrant standard for the Church until wise men like Guru Brian McLaren of the Emergent Church movement finally arrived on the scene? Or maybe it was that their god of Open Theism was awakened from his/he/its loving stupor suddenly realizing that his/her/its creation had so drastically changed; and at the same time this was happening postmodern American culture had also shifted so that his/her/its word was now so hopelessly out of touch with this world today that he/she/it needed to raise up the Emergent Church movement to rehash Karl Barth’s neo-orthodox view of Holy Scripture and liberal theology’s social gospel.

However, although it isn’t fashionable, there is one other alternative; could it actually be that the omniscient and perfect LORD God Almighty–Who cannot change–simply means exactly what He has said in Holy Scripture? What do you think; just maybe in the Bible we can see that God has clearly told us that His Word is infallible irregardless of what any part of the world He created thinks, or what any culture that degenerate mankind has erected within it may think of their Creator’s timeless commands. Maybe Almighty God is smarter than Brian McLaren, and it might be that He also knows that these societies–built as they are upon the shifting sands of human opinions–would need to have an absolute standard of truth that they could live by. So in the Bible the Lord decided to reveal everything that fallen mankind would need to know about how the Creator expects his creatures to live for all generations and in every culture of His world?

What Did Jesus Teach His Followers About Holy Scripture?

So what did the LORD God Himself–Jesus Christ of Nazareth–say when He stood upon His Own planet? The Apostle Matthew, one of our eyewitnesses, reports that the Master had a little skirmish with Satan during which He said – *“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* I cover this in more depth in my article “Emerging With A Christian View of Scripture” so all I’m pointing out here is that Jesus is using what is often derisively called the “proof text” method in His teaching. Oh yes, I am well aware

this method of teaching the Bible is considered almost hopelessly out of vogue by many who would call themselves Christian these days:

This is quite obviously a core belief within the trendy Emergent Church. Dan Kimball, who is a pastor within this movement and author of *The Emerging Church*, made the following statement during an interview with Brent Kunkle on the **Stand To Reason** radio show:

There are pastors who know the Bible inside and out and can preach excellent sermons and exegete these passages [of the Bible] and everything else, but you start asking them basic questions about the mindsets of different people especially younger generations in our culture and so many are just still just thinking of the way people might have been thinking about God and spirituality and what Christianity is from a twenty year old perspective or thirty years ago. (program aired August 7, 2005, www.str.org)

Men and women, this is where you need to recognize how it is that the lack of respect for the authority of the Bible begins within a cultic system. Kimball is revealing a bias—no matter how slightly it begins—against the proper method of preaching when in effect he says: It’s all well and good to really know your Bible, but that outdated method of expository preaching just isn’t going to reach people anymore. Can you see the root of pragmatism beginning to show? To further demonstrate the lack of respect for expository preaching, and even for the texts of Holy Scripture themselves, within this emerging cult let me give you another quick example of just where the Emergent Church has veered off-track. Here is what Emergent Church Guru Brian McLaren says about this type of “problematic” proof-texting method of teaching that was used by our Lord:

I intentionally avoid including a lot of Biblical references in my writing because of the method of “proof-texting” is terribly problematic. Yes – it can show the Biblical roots beneath a statement, but it can also be used to give the appearance that a statement is supported by Biblical authority when it isn’t.
(<http://www.anewchristian.com/archives/000406.html>)

Or the proof-text method, which was clearly used and taught by the Master Teacher Christ Jesus of Nazareth Himself, can controvert an entire erroneous Emergent Church movement if it is properly employed as I have been doing under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit in my recent articles on this growing cult of the Emergent Church. Those of us who have studied Comparative Religions and non-Christian cults recognize this as virtually a textbook example of what leaders of cultic systems do when they try and subvert the authority of the Bible in order to elevate their own teachings in the eyes of their particular followers. But this does not alter the fact that Jesus is clearly teaching us to use this method here in Matthew 4:4 because our Lord Himself is quoting *from* a text of Holy Scripture as the ultimate source of authority to prove His point – Deuteronomy 8:3 of the Old Testament to be exact.

You will also see this exact pattern of teaching continue with Christ’s Own disciples right within the pages of the New Testament itself. It’s virtually impossible to miss as the epistles are chock full of references to the Old Testament to insure the veracity of what these Apostles themselves taught. And then you’ll see *their* disciples—the early Church Fathers—doing the very *same* thing in their own writings. In my personal library I have a 38 volume encyclopedia set containing virtually everything these disciples of the Apostles—as well as *their* own disciples (and so on) wrote—with page after page of so-called proof-texting. In fact so copiously did these Church Fathers quote the Holy Scriptures—and at a time when you could be put to death for *being* a Christian—that even if we lost all of the New Testament documents we could still reconstruct it except for 6 verses through the writings of these men alone.

Knowing their Lord's commands in 2 Timothy 2:2 and Jude 3 that reliable men would always be teaching and contending for the Faith, the Reformers were able to see from their own study of verifiable church history that the doctrine of the Sola Scriptura appears obvious to those who have eyes to see. Here is what needs to be understood in this generation as the Devil intensifies his attacks on the Bible through weak-willed Christians and false professors – *having a **form** of godliness, but denying the power thereof*, the power here being God the Holy Spirit. These brave men who were raised up by the Spirit of the Lord simply traced the history of Christian doctrine right on back down through history past those early Church Fathers mentioned earlier, who themselves had learned how to teach sound doctrine from *their* own teachers the Apostles, until these godly Reformers reached back to the very Source *of* the Christian faith Christ Jesus Himself.

Thy Word Is Truth

And since we have already established that the Master used God's inerrant and infallible Word in Holy Scripture as another "witness" to what He was teaching, let's look at what else Jesus Christ of Nazareth had to say to His disciples about the Bible. Later on in this same Book of Matthew Jesus says – "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them*" – Matthew 5:17. This is the way a first century Jewish rabbi could refer to the Hebrew Scriptures that now make up our Old Testament. Then in verse 18 the Master says – "*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*" Clearly this is in agreement with the verses in Psalm 119 cited earlier – *Your word, O LORD, is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens, and – Your laws endure to this day;* because the last time I checked Heaven and earth have not disappeared.

As far as the skeptical view of truth held by so many within the Emergent Church movement, in His High Priestly prayer as recorded by an eyewitness to the event the Apostle John our Lord prayed – "*I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word** is truth*" (John 17:15-17, **KJV**). You might notice here that Christ says – "*Thy Word is Truth,*" not "*Thy Word **contains** Truth*". Thus the Master destroys the essence of Karl Barth's false teaching on Holy Scripture which can be summed up as: The Bible is a mailbox in which we receive communiqués from Heaven. Because instead what Jesus has just said is: The Bible itself *is* the message from Heaven. And the fact of the matter is that mankind just doesn't want to do what the Bible says so we look for ecumenical purpose driven emergent ways to reinterpret it, or to deny its Truth outright. It really is an age old problem, so let me just spell it out for you as clearly as I can c-o-m-p-r-o-m-i-s-e.

However, just because so many within the Evangelical community today do not have the intestinal fortitude (read: faith) to stand up and be counted for Christ, it does not mean that the LORD God Almighty is going to capitulate to our world because we'd prefer to believe that some of the things He says in His Word are too hard for us to preach to postmodern societies today. The adherents of the Emergent Church tell us that they are the *true* followers of Jesus because they have the *more* complete understanding of the "gospel" than others in the Evangelical community. But this is exactly where the divisive spirit behind this schismatic movement is actually revealed, and furthermore it should be our indication that the Emergent Church is in reality an emerging pagan cult being allowed to operate undercover as "Christian" in our Lord's Church by obtuse Evangelical leaders like NAE president Ted Haggard.

All one has to do to see this unholy truth is to listen carefully to what Emergent Church leaders like Brian McLaren are not saying (which says more than what they do say), and then look at the clearly non-Christian alliance McLaren himself makes with a flaming heretic like Dr. Alan Jones. By endorsing Jones' book, in which the Guru confides that Jones' "work stimulates and encourages me deeply," McLaren has revealed that he is stimulated and actually "deeply" encouraged by someone who is teaching *antichrist* doctrine. Here is what Jones himself says about the substitutionary atonement of Christ Jesus our Lord – "implicit **in the cross** [is] that Jesus' sacrifice was to appease an angry God. Penal substitution was the name of **this vile doctrine**." For more on this deceiver I refer you to my article "Emergent Church: Guru Brian McLaren". I must admit that Jones' work "stimulates" me as well, and because of his outright denial of Christ's ultimate sacrifice, my love for my Master has spawned these recent exposes to bring the light of His Word onto the darkness of the Emergent Church in an effort to expose this paganism to the rest of His Evangelical church.

Men and women, the *only* way for emerging cults like this one to be foisted upon the Church is for them to denigrate the authority of the Bible. This is exactly what all false teachers *must* do if they wish to open the door to "alternate" interpretations of the Bible, because the penal substitutionary atonement is the logical and necessary conclusion when referencing all the texts of Holy Scripture that bear on this most important doctrine. I want you to see who would be behind attacking this core doctrine of the historic orthodox Christian faith so let me make this as simple as I can: Colossians 2:15 – *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them **by the cross***. 1 John 3:8 – *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might **destroy the works of the devil***. So considering that Satan is the enemy of men's souls, can you see who is your likely serpentine source in wanting to take the focus of the Christian Church off preaching this incredible vicarious sacrifice our Lord made *by the cross* to the lost?

If it hopes to survive the Evangelical community had best wake up to the fact that pathetic proponents of the exact same scholastic skepticism of the exact same variations of liberal theology as taught by serpents like Bultmann and Fosdick and Tillich have now arrived within the walls of this camp via the Trojan Horse of the hip and heretical Emergent Church. And if it is not expelled *immediately* then this neo-liberal theology is going to kill mainline Evangelical churches in exactly the *same* way that it killed every mainline denomination that let these vipers remain within its own walls the first time their doctrines of demons were injected into the bloodstream of American Christianity. Don't you remember that Christ tells us – *ye should be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees* and 1 Corinthians 5:6 reminds us – *that a little yeast **works through the whole batch** of dough?*

I tell you in the Lord that we are right now facing a **New Downgrade** which is as obvious as the consistent attacks on Evangelicalism's so-called misunderstanding of the substitutionary atonement that are currently being marshalled by outright heretics like Jones, and then followed up by the milder counterattacks coming behind it from more mainstream counterfeit Christian teachers like Brian McLaren to spread confusion deeper into the heart of the Church. After all doesn't the Guru come right out and tell you that he is a "**new kind** of Christian?" God the Holy Spirit has already told us that there are *those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are **false** apostles, **deceitful** workmen, **masquerading** as apostles of Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:12-13), and Jesus Himself said – "*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in **sheep's** clothing,*" – [they aren't going to walk up to you and say, "Hi, I'm a counterfeit Christian."] – "*but inwardly they are ferocious **wolves*** – [why that's kind of harsh and unloving, isn't it?]. *By their fruit you will recognize them*" (Matthew

7:15-16). And Philippians 3:18 tells us one of the easiest ways to recognize one of the Devil's masquerading ministers – *they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*.

Love In Action

Let me bring together what I have been talking about thus far in preparation for another discussion on another day concerning the despicable lack of respect for the authority of the Bible in so much the Emergent Church movement. Verse 2 of our text – *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*, tells us that the Lord had already commanded these faithful preachers of His Word down through the long centuries of the historic orthodox Christian Church to take doctrine *much* more seriously than even the timid and tepid Evangelical leaders in our Lord's "business as usual" Church do today. And sadly Horatius Bonar's clear warning went unheeded:

There is some danger of falling into a soft and effeminate Christianity, under the plea of a lofty and ethereal theology. Christianity was born for endurance;...not languid, nor childish, nor cowardly. It walks with a strong step and erect frame;... It does not fear to speak the stern word of condemnation against error, nor to raise its voice against surrounding evils, under the pretext it is not of this world; it does not shrink from giving honest reproof, lest it come under the charge of displaying an unchristian spirit. It calls sin sin, in whomsoever it is found, and would rather risk the accusation of being actuated by a bad spirit than not to discharge an explicit duty. Let us not misjudge strong words used in honest controversy...

The religion of both Old and New Testaments is marked by fervent testimonies against evil. To speak smooth things in such a case may be sentimentalism, but it is not Christianity... It is a betrayal of truth and righteousness. I know that charity covers a multitude of sins; but it does not call evil good, because a good man has done it; it does not excuse inconsistencies, because the inconsistent brother has a high name and a fervent spirit; crookedness and worldliness are still crookedness, though exhibited in one who seems to have reached no common height of attainment.

I fear that that the great evangelist and teacher Dr. R.A. Torrey may be proved right in that too many of our preachers today within our Lord's precious Church are but "women in trousers." Men of God, the time has *now* arrived to stand boldly in the face of this encroaching apostasy and evil denial of the inerrancy and infallibility of God's Word in the Bible. Our Master was the most loving Example of a Man that there has ever been, and yet when He encountered religious men who nullified the Word of God by their own traditions, just as those in the fetid cult of the Emergent Church are doing right under our noses, the Master didn't call them to schedule a conference to "discuss a loving way to set aside our doctrinal differences." No! Jesus spoke out; He warned these evil compromisers about the wrath of God which is going to come because of such things!

"But don't you remember that God is love?" Why, yes I do: God is love (see–1 John 4:16); Jesus is God (see–John 1:1); therefore Jesus is love. So as we close now, let's see how Perfect Love in human flesh handled the religious leaders who mishandled the Hebrew Scriptures in His day. Oh, and by the way, it's quite common among people deceived by leaders within the Emergent Church to say that the Bible nowhere says it is the Word of God; perhaps they should carefully note verse 13 below:

*He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions... Thus you nullify **the word of God** by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that" (Mark 7:6-9,13).*

It becomes pretty obvious here that this is *not* the phony seeker sensitive Jesus of inclusivism Who came to preach "the kingdom of God" as described by the smug *self*-righeous Emergent counterfeit Christian Church. No, here the incontrovertable testimony of the actual historic record of His life in the Bible makes it abundantly clear that Christ Jesus was completely intolerant of the false views about the Holy Scriptures held by these men to whom He was speaking. Our Lord repeatedly made no concessions whatsoever to those who simply would not do what God had commanded them to do in His inerrant and infallible Word; and this was to be the Master's unyielding stance all the way to the Cross. There was no compromise of the proper teaching of God's Word by Jesus of Nazareth no matter *what* "traditions" were currently being taught within the quite religious and pluralistic culture in which He lived.

Christ undoubtedly adhered to the proof-texting method of Sola Scriptura by placing the Holy Scriptures—God's inerrant and infallible Word—above *any* so-called "shift" of the prevailing whims of this particular society, and one can also plainly see that the Master was not concerned even one iota if they thought that He was out of touch with their sinful lifestyles. Now this could only have been His position if our Lord knew that it was God Himself Who was speaking in these Holy Scriptures. And further Christ Jesus our Lord—the perfect Example of a loving Christian—is also undoubtedly expecting that we would indeed be able to understand just what it is that is being taught within the Word of God.

And watch out for the Emergent Church and one of their core doctrines that Jesus of Nazareth came to preach "the Kingdom of God." What they mean by this redefinition of biblical terminology ends up being exactly the same old social gospel that was preached by the previous cult of liberal theology.

Ah, but that is for another day...