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# DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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## The Emerging Church – The Rising Generation

*A Maturing Church?*

Jewel Grewe

**Crossing the Jordan or Returning to Egypt?** Brian McLaren, an Emergent Pastor says: *I'm worried that many of us think we've arrived: we've crossed the Jordan River and now we're in the Promised Land. If we've made a crossing, it's the Red Sea (or whatever), which does put Egypt behind us. But we've got a wide wilderness ahead of us, wilderness where our character will be tested and many of us will be tempted to go back to Egypt. We're still quite a way from the Jordan River. We've made a beginning, but we've got a long way to go. And of course, once we get to the Jordan River, that's an ending, but it's also another beginning, you know? I just want to make sure we learn what we need to learn crossing the wilderness.*

[www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000133.html](http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000133.html)

Already there is a problem here. Why would an Emerging Church pastor and author use the analogy of the Children of Israel? God says: *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:* Psalm 95:10

As a born-again child of God, my understanding of what is taught in Scripture is based on the Truth that has set me free from wandering in the wilderness, or even the thought of “going back to Egypt”. True Christianity has proven beyond doubt the veracity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**The reality of the Gospel.** In response to a recent mailing, a brother from Zimbabwe (a country that is presently going through great struggles) wrote:

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Gal. 1:8*

*This gospel is Jesus Christ crucified. It is the message of what Jesus Christ has done for us at the cross of Calvary, in its entirety! The message of the cross is what He did at the cross, for us to God, (reconciliation, deliverance, redemption, atonement), to and in us through His death, (our death to self, to sin, to the world, dying in Him, victory over sin and the world) and life to us in the Spirit of His resurrection (imparting a new life to us thus making us a new creation, living His life in us, giving us His Holy Spirit and empowering us and many gifts also, promises and love.)*

*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 1 Cor. 1:23*

In reference to the present situation in Zimbabwe his comment was: *God Himself allows what He wills. Whatever He does it is for our good. Honestly, Zimbabwean Christians are privileged to have trials and problems around, because as I see it, God sends or allows them to build holiness. We have many scriptures that show us how to live in this present situation and I am embarrassed at our failure to do so.*

*Hebrews 10:34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.*

This is the attitude of the heart of a truly *Mature Christian*. It is when one suffers the loss of all things; the Word of God becomes the sustenance of life. During times of drought, the roots go deep for water. During trials and tribulations, the Christian realizes that he/she is helpless without the comfort of the everlasting arms underneath holding them up.

Yet the “emerging church” has the audacity to say the church had it all wrong down through history and only now is coming to *maturity*.

**Still in the Nursery.** In reading books written by the “Emergent” authors, the same overwhelming feeling of hopelessness comes over me that I experience whilst sitting in a nursery full of crying babies and screaming toddlers. It is a dulling sense of confusion.

The “educated” Emergent teachers (Change Agents) are making grand plans to “reconstruct” the church into what they perceive it should be for the *new* generation. Quite quickly I came to the conclusion that these writers were sailing uncharted seas. They aren't quite sure where their “plan” will take them, or even what their “plan” will look like when it is completed.

The maturing of the church as seen by the Emergent authors is a messy mix of ideas and dialogues and “conversations” to discover how we can follow the “example” of Jesus.

**Phoenix Rising.** The *Herescope* blog, which is updated weekly, gives an excellent analysis of the *genesis* of the *Emerging Church*. It is not just a noisy nursery of little ones all clamoring for attention, but rather a deliberate and calculated plan to deconstruct the church, especially the

Evangelical Church. Out of the *deconstruction*, a transformation is supposed to be emerging like the *Phoenix* rising out of the ashes. The *Phoenix* is a mythical bird. At the end of its life it builds a nest of twigs that ignites. Both the bird and the nest are burned. Out of the ashes a new young bird arises. The new bird is almost immortal. This new *Phoenix* is combining the “best” of all religions and philosophies of man to usher in a New World Order. We used to hear that terminology and now it is almost blasé. The world has become accustomed to the “change”. The church has been “processed” right along with the world.

**The Process.** *Herescope* (1-18-06) gives an overview of the history. In 1962 a book was published jointly by the National Training Laboratory (NTL) (established 1947) and the National Education Association (NAE) entitled **Five Issues in Training**. This book addressed the process of ‘unfreezing, changing and refreezing’ attitudes to bring about change.

- UNFREEZE old attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values, and mindsets. This means that traditional theology and doctrine must be broken down. Very persuasive arguments, coercion, questioning, peer pressure and indoctrination are used to facilitate this process.
- CHANGE the mind. This means altering one’s opinions, beliefs, values, philosophies and theologies. . . call into question the validity or meaning of the old way. . . sell a person on the ‘new’ way as better, more productive, more effective, etc. At this point it is very important to disparage the old way so that the new way looks bright and promising.
- REFREEZE to the new way. Establish it so that it takes over control of the person. Now there are new beliefs, opinions, values, attitudes and behaviors that have taken root and gained a foothold. This is the new paradigm, a new ‘transformation’. Psycho-social research shows that the new beliefs are more fully integrated when someone signs a covenant or has to put the new beliefs into action (take measurable steps to reach a goal).

**Change Agents.** By this *process* “Change Agents” were created. This *process* is now being used in education, theology, medicine, business and government. Retreats were a common method used, but now it has morphed into *leadership training seminars, conferences and workshops* (National Training Labs). The sessions are designed to produce more *Change Agents*. Within the church, the training is for the purpose of a global church *transformation*. This processing has been going on for at least three decades. Ken Blanchard, Warren Bennis and Willis Harmon are three well-known names with strong interconnections with the evangelical community, especially through workshops, seminars and books that bring the corporate business model

into the church, and that can be directly linked to the *process*.

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/01/change-agents-for-church.html>

**Leadership Network.** Bob Buford has had extensive influence through his Leadership Network. This network was Peter Drucker’s main outreach into the private sector, which he considered to be the third leg of the societal stool which needed transformation. Rick Warren and Bill Hybels became actively involved with the *Leadership Network* and thus it gained widespread respectability and influence.

**Targeting Youth.** The youth were especially targeted by Leadership Network. In 2001 the **Young Leader Networks** were hosting working labs where they were teaching them how to “act as a transforming presence” in the Christian experience. Leadership Network also formed the **Terra Nova Project**. This project was considered to be the vanguard movement to transform evangelicalism.

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/01/leadership-network-spawns-emergent.html>

**An Underground Movement?** Terra Nova means “New Ground” or “New Earth.” Brad Smith acknowledged that the plan was kept “underground” as it was being formulated. In his report he outlined the philosophical underpinnings of the creation of what has now become the **Emergent Church**. This report is of concern for a number of reasons.

First, Leadership Network was founded by Bob Buford, and it served a purpose of diffusing the social philosophies of management guru Peter Drucker throughout evangelicaldom. Second, the plan below indicates that Leadership Network viewed its role to be a “change agent” organization from the outset, purposefully serving as a vehicle to facilitate post-modernism within evangelicaldom. Third, the connection between Rick Warren and Leadership Network cannot be underemphasized, as Warren’s “Second Reformation” looks very much like a hybrid of the emerging church movement that Leadership Network was working to create.

Smith states: “...Leadership Network was one of the first national organizations to platform postmodern leaders as early as 1994, and over the past seven years, we have watched mainstream publishers and conference providers, denominations and para-church ministries provide increasingly powerful vehicles for the postmodern message to be expressed.”

In the following paragraph Smith uses the term “tipping point,” which has to do with shifting a paradigm (worldview). In this comment, he acknowledges Leadership Network’s key role in shifting the rest of evangelicaldom into a postmodern mindset:

"...We believe the 'tipping point' has been reached and the message is one that cannot be re-caged. The expression of postmodernism will continue and Leadership Network will continue its role of supporting the efforts of other networks and organizations to further this message."

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/01/leadership-network-and-terra-nova.html>

**Change.** One of the key leaders of the Emergent Church movement created by Leadership Network is Brian McLaren. He is traveling around the country at the present time holding conferences based on his new book titled *Everything Must Change*. "Change" seems to be the key word. (It is interesting to note that it has also become a *mantra* in the present political campaign in the U.S.A.) There are always structures and individuals who need to change. However, the God of the Bible says: *For I am the Lord, I change not; . . .* Mal. 3:6.

The Word of God does not change. McLaren is specifically speaking about "change" in relation to the church. Of deep concern is that he calls for a "deconstructive phase." By "deconstruction" he means getting rid of the old "conventional" orthodoxy and bringing in a new "emerging" spirituality about the sacredness of the Earth, saving the planet, environmentalism, peace, justice, population control, etc.

**Deconstructive phase.** From Brian McLaren's Blog: "The postmodern transition is well underway, but it's still a process. The early deconstructive phase of the postmodern transition is evolving into a more constructive and creative phase, exemplified (for me) by thinkers and writers like **Wendell Berry and Ken Wilber** in the culture at large, plus a number of us writing specifically for the Christian community. (Of course, some folks are still fighting against the earliest phases, not realizing that the 'battle lines' keep moving. But I shouldn't use battle imagery, because I don't see it that way.) For all the work we've done and all the progress we've made, we still have so far to go. ." [www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000133.html](http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000133.html)

Amazingly, the direction the church is supposed to take is based on the spiritual culture of authors who have written books that are not Christian:

**Wendell Berry** (According to Wikipedia): *Berry's publisher and editor of 30 years, Jack Shoemaker, is an ordained Buddhist who also publishes many Buddhist works, including Taking the Path of Zen, by Robert Baker Aitken, in which Aitken thanks Wendell Berry for reviewing the manuscript and making comments. Berry is a fellow of Britain's Temenos Academy, a learned society devoted to the ecclesiastical understanding of all faiths and spiritual pursuits; Berry publishes frequently in the annual Temenos Academy Review, funded by the Prince of Wales.*

**Ken Wilbur** (According to Wikipedia) *is an American author who writes on psychology, philosophy, mysticism, ecology, and spiritual evolution. He has been described as New Age <sup>[1]</sup>, although he is critical of the New Age movement in his books<sup>[2]</sup>. His work formulates what he calls an "integral theory of consciousness." He is a leading proponent of the integral movement and founded the Integral Institute in 1998.<sup>[3]</sup>*

*While Wilber has practiced Buddhist meditation methods, and the beliefs of Madhyamika Buddhism, particularly as articulated in the philosophy of Nagarjuna, underpin his work, <sup>[4]</sup> Wilber does not self-identify as a Buddhist.<sup>[5]</sup>*

Be prepared for a *total makeover* of Christianity by these Emergent leaders. Brian McLaren is calling for a *DeepShift* to a total transformation of church and society in the world. The emerging church leaders actually invent new doctrines and/or come up with new meanings for biblical terms. They do not believe in the absolute truth of the Scriptures. They also believe it is possible to take psychological, philosophical or religious ideas and mix them into Christianity to create a new postmodern "apologetic" which will result in a "New" or "Second Reformation."

According to McLaren's new theology, "Jesus' message is not actually about escaping this troubled world for heaven's blissful shores, as is popularly assumed, but instead is about God's will being done on this troubled earth as it is in heaven." (*Everything Must Change*, p. 4)

McLaren claims to have a more "vibrant form of the Christian faith that is holistic, integral, and balanced." (p. 34) This is the "emerging view" in which "you will participate in the transformation of the world" by "participating in his [Jesus'] ongoing work of personal and global transformation and liberation from evil and injustice." (pp. 79-80) This is otherwise known as Dominionism, the belief that man can build the kingdom of God on earth.

All of this emergent theology ("New Spirituality") stands in sharp contrast to biblical Christianity, which can be summed up in this Scripture"

*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 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 16:16-18*

This is a full confession of the doctrine that is the very foundation of the Gospel upon which the church was established.

*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Ephesians 1:17-23*

When Christ ascended far above all heavens in order to FILL all things (it would be impossible to even start to comprehend what that means), *“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: Ephesians 4:11-13*

We can have full confidence in this wonderful Saviour who fulfilled the work that He was sent from God to accomplish in this sinful world. Our completeness is in Him.

**Influence from Within.** The greatest tragedy is that most of the Emerging Church leaders come from conservative and fundamentalist backgrounds. They are influencing every major denomination from within. Quoting from the booklet (available from this ministry) *From Which Well Are You Drinking*, J. David Winscott says the following:

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

In thinking about the larger context, it certainly does seem that there is an all-out attack on the church. We know that this is nothing new. Satan has been doing that ever since the church was instituted. Christians, now is the time to be watchmen! Yes, it is a time of purifying for the Body of Christ. Our encouragement lies in that *“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” (Isa. 59:19b.)*

Throughout history, true believers have persevered through impossible circumstances, and were able to stand true to the

faith that was once delivered to the saints. So, why is this generation different? Why must the glorious Truth be changed for an “emerging” church and a “New Breed” of Christian?

In 1894, William Hooker invented the first mouse trap. The design has stayed the same for over 110 years because it works. As many traps that have been designed since, none has proven to be so functional as the one Mr. Hooker built.

When Christ established the Church upon the foundation of the Apostles, He declared that the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against it. He provided the only way of salvation – through the shedding of His blood. There is no way to improve upon the work that Christ accomplished at Calvary. The outworking of the life of Christ in the believer is that they become the “lights” in the world to shine in the darkness.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the church was being “infected” with modernism and worldly philosophies. In response there were a number of General Assemblies and Bible Conferences which formulated the American fundamentalist beliefs in response to modernism, which were the following:

1. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures;
2. The virgin birth and the deity of Jesus (Is. 7:14);
3. The doctrine of substitutionary atonement through God’s grace and human faith (Hebrews 9);
4. The bodily resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28); and
5. The authenticity of Christ’s miracles.

Out of this response, Fundamentalism was born. Mention that word today and you will receive a wry look. Somehow it brings to mind an image of a “mean-spirited” and “hateful” sort of person that is ready to go to war with anyone who disagrees with him. Unfortunately the press and media have played upon this image. “Extremists” have gone off the “deep end,” as well as “legalists.” And all “fundamentalists” are lumped together. For example, if you embark upon any criticisms of McLaren’s new book, *Everything Must Change*, especially if your criticisms are based on traditional biblical theology, you have already been caricatured, castigated, ridiculed and mocked. You are part of a bad old “suicide machine” metaphor that is destroying planetary peace, damaging the earth’s ecosystem, creating “global dysfunctions” and contributing to “systemic injustice” (p. 34) – all caused by your dangerously antiquated “conventional” theological “framing story.” You are likely to be “tense, judgmental, imbalanced, reactionary, negative, and hypocritical.” (p. 33) You are part of a failed religion “that has specialized in people’s destination in the afterlife but has failed to address significant social injustices in this life.” You have also neglected to “address the

dominant societal and global realities" of "systemic injustice, systemic poverty, systemic ecological crisis," etc. (p. 33)

Out of respect for the intent of those who took at stand in 1910, it is honorable to say that a true Fundamentalist is one who is *...not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;* (Romans 1:16)

As we look back to that time, we now recognize that a new "paradigm" has entered the church. The strange thing is that not many leaders discuss it or even understand what is happening. In spite of the proliferation of knowledge, the understanding of those in authority has become dull. Jesus said on a number of occasions, *"he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."*

**The Emerging/Emergent Church Movement** has come on the scene in the last few years. In trying to understand what is happening, it is important to keep the veracity of Scripture in mind. In a book *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches* by Robert Webber, a long-time leader in the emerging church movement who has called for a return to the liturgical rites of Catholicism, the introduction was of interest. Webber draws on sociologists (William Strauss and Neil Howe in their book *The Fourth Turning: What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny*) to determine the four cycles of how people change. The cycles from this book are the following:

- *"The First Turning is a High*, an upbeat era of strengthening institutions and weakening individualism, when a new civic order implants and the old values regime decays.
- *The Second Turning is an Awakening*, a passionate era of spiritual upheaval, when the civic order comes under attack from a new values regime.
- *The Third Turning is an Unraveling*, a downcast era of strengthening individualism and weakening institutions, when the old civic order decays and the new values regime implants.
- *The Fourth Turning is a Crisis*, a decisive era of secular upheaval, when the values regime propels the replacement of the old civic order with a new one." (Pg 10)

Webber then proceeds to draw the analogy with the Evangelical Church after it broke away from fundamentalism in the first part of the last century. He says, in brief:

- *The First Turning – High Evangelicals* (1946-1964) ...influential leaders called for engagement with philosophy and the intellectual ideas of the day, to the recovery of a robust involvement with social issues, and to a new form of ecumenical cooperation . . . new names were in the limelight – Billy Graham, Carl F.H. Henry; new institutions

were born – Fuller Seminary, the National Association of Evangelicals, *Christianity Today*."...

- *The Second Turning – Awakening Evangelicals* (1964-1984) ....Attention shifted from institutions to self. . . shift away from scientific theology and apologetics – interest became Christ and culture. . . spread of existential philosophy. New focus on experience (essentially the experience of self)....
- *The Third Turning – Explosion of Evangelical Pragmatism* (1984-2004) This was a new face – absorbed the relational evangelicals of the awakening period. Theology became a non-issue and irrelevant. The divorce between theology and practice was complete. "Meeting the Needs" became the important "force" of this time. It was noted by a lack of theological vision for ministry.
- *The Fourth Turning: The Emerging Church and the Younger Evangelical Leaders* (2004- ) New crisis – fueled by the emergence of a postmodern, post-Christian, neo-pagan culture and the global war on terrorism. The new leaders find themselves out of sync with traditional evangelicals (scientific theology) and the pragmatism of mega-evangelicalism. Evangelicalism has formed an identity marked by new insights, new concerns and new patterns of theological applications, worship, spirituality and ministry. . . so the new group of evangelicals will take the church beyond the unhappy split between traditional theology on one hand and pragmatic practice on the other. (Condensed from pages 11-16)

The Emergent church leaders are proliferating like rabbits. Their books are flooding the bookstores. The desire for "spirituality" by whatever means has become the *mantra* for gaining access to God. Confusion abounds. Experience has become the measurement of the New Spirituality. Somehow direct access to God is "supposedly" accomplished whether it be by walking the labyrinth, Taize, "Christian Yoga," Meditation, Contemplative Prayer, journaling, candles, incense and icons, etc.. Most of the emergent leaders hold to various forms of eastern mysticism, and are rapidly gaining ground by integrating and infusing these doctrines into the church. Much of their theology is based on an evolutionary view of man.

Since fundamental biblical theology is not important, any scriptural injunctions are irrelevant in their mind. Any path that bypasses the cross of Christ can lead one to God in their thinking. It is all part of a grand new ecumenism.

Emergent leaders de-emphasize the Word of God, the literal Truth found in the Scriptures. They emphasize "stories" and "metaphors" and "images" rather than propositional statements of truth. They do not believe in heaven and hell,

and they do not believe in a coming Judgment Day. They do not take stands against moral issues such as homosexuality and abortion.

The booklet *From Which Well Are You Drinking?* sums up the emerging church movement:

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

The Apostle Paul encountered philosophical and theological relativism and idolatry on Mars’ Hill in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). Unchecked by the truth and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, relativism, humanism and secularism always leads to idolatry and there is nothing new under the sun.” (p. 37)

**A Word to the Church.** *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth is as vital for the Christian today as it has been since the day it was penned by the Paul, the Apostle. Sadly, today the truth of God is being changed into a “lie.” Are we living in the time that: And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (II Thessalonians 2:11)? You judge for yourself.*

## **JOURNEY TO THE ANCIENT FAITH – THE ORTHODOX CHURCH**

*Barbara Wilhelm*

In his March 2008 article [Ancient-Future Heresies](#) T.A. McMahon made reference to Fr. Peter Gillquist, Jack Sparks, Jon Braun and other Campus Crusade leaders who went on a journey in the early 1970’s to “recover” ancient liturgies. McMahon states that they were a “fore-runner of today’s ancient-future-emergent movement.” Through the years their name changed from the New Covenant Apostolic Order to the Evangelical Orthodox Church to the Antiochian Orthodox Church. And today they are out fishing for unsuspecting souls who will believe their pious creeds and we need to be aware of their existence to warn against them. Here is what their ad in our local newspaper promised:

*Come hear one man’s story of “A Journey to the Ancient Faith.” Fr. Peter Gillquist will share the dynamic story of how a large group of Bible believing Christians went searching for the New Testament Church. They were surprised to find it is alive and well. ...Before Denominations...Before Division...Before We Lost Our Way There was The Faith. The Apostles, The Church; The*

*Christianity you are looking for is the future of American Spirituality.*

Intriguing though all that might sound, it lacked some vital elements. Notice that there is no mention of Jesus, but there is an emphasis on the apostles, as in apostolic succession. There is a mention of “the faith” but we would find out it is “not the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). There is a great emphasis on the church and the priesthood (no, not the one in Hebrews 7:17 where Jesus is our “High Priest Forever after the order of Melchizedek”). The other vital element missing was the reliance on the Bible as the sole authority of truth. Notice too the word “spirituality” the new “in” word that substitutes for simple faith and devotion to Jesus. The problem with “spirituality” is that it opens people up to other “spirits” by its very definition. Like “Christian Mysticism” and “Contemplative Spirituality” we find ourselves in new territory where the ground is not the rock-solid one of simple Bible faith where our foundation is simply Jesus. Why does it seem that every time we start looking for “more”, we find ourselves back in the garden of Eden where we want to cross the boundary line again?

**A Journey to Deception.** My husband and I and a dear friend went to the meeting. We heard nothing of the life and joy of Jesus and His Spirit but a great deal of history, creeds, councils, liturgy, doctrines, more liturgy and more councils. They billed the meeting as a journey to the past to find the real church. We heard a reliance on the Nicene Creed repeatedly throughout the evening. During the whole meeting, the name of Jesus was mentioned 3 times only - twice by those of us with questions. We heard scriptures twisted and "church history" put above all other things. They kept making assumptions that they knew what the apostles said during the first hundred years and were simply passing things on to us. They believed in the sign of the cross, bowing and rote prayers. Their attire was totally Roman Catholic priestly garb, though they don’t believe in celibacy. They are currently celebrating Lent for 40 days by abstaining from all meat and dairy. Oh, this might be an appropriate time for me to mention that I was a devout Catholic for 35 years and even took a course in Catholic doctrine from the Catholic Church after I was saved so that I could understand what that church truly teaches. And what I was seeing and hearing bore some striking resemblances to the bondages of Rome that I left so gladly 30 years ago.

In further educating myself on this Evangelical Antiochian Orthodox Church and its beliefs. What I found wasn’t really a surprise, but it was heart-breaking. [www.saintpatrickorthodox.org/](http://www.saintpatrickorthodox.org/)

*\*Everything in italics from here on will be from the Conciliar Press Ministries publications of the Orthodox Church.*

Interestingly, it was their own definition of a cult that can be used to show how much of a cult this church is.

Their criteria for a cult are: *a group of people who focus on a religious doctrine which deviates from the Tradition of the historic Church as revealed by Jesus Christ, established by His Apostles, and guarded by the seven Ecumenical Councils of the Church.*

Contrast that with these Scriptures:

**Isaiah 8:20** *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light in them.*

**Acts 17:11** *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

**Also: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and I Cor. 2:13**

In all the above Scriptures there is a total reliance on the God-breathed, life-giving, unchanging Word of God. Yet, the Orthodox definition of a church depends upon adherence to Tradition, the Apostles and the seven Ecumenical Councils. One is dependence on God-breathed authority; the other on men. Even in their description of the Bible they add the dryness of history and of men's doctrine:

*The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God and is a crucial part of God's self-revelation to the human race. The New Testament records the birth and life of Jesus as well as the writings of His Apostles. It also includes some of the history of the early Church and especially sets forth the Church's apostolic doctrine.*

Again, a rather lengthy description of different councils that were held throughout history follows. Always there is an addition to the simple Word of God by calling on history, liturgy, councils, etc.

The shift in emphasis became glaringly apparent in a booklet devoted exclusively to Scripture. Prepare yourself and realize that the italics to show the Orthodox comments end exactly where they are supposed to:

*The most sincere efforts of Christian biblical interpreters, no matter how intelligent, how charismatic, how gifted in biblical languages, how well-loved, or how eloquent have not been sufficient to quell the confusion that now exists...Okay, so where do we go from here? What I am about to say, I say with more conviction and firmness of belief than I have possessed in over thirty years as a student of the Scriptures. I wish to give a two-word answer to that question which represents what I unequivocally believe to be the one and only prospect for Christians who wish to return to the true message of Scripture and to understand its*

*divine meaning. Apart from this priceless key to interpretation, the fragmentation we see around us will continue unabated until finally there is nothing left of the original Christian proclamation. What I'm about to give you is not just another opinion or idea. It is our only hope! It's called Holy Tradition. **YOU MUST BE KIDDING!***

I am glad that he capitalized and boldened those words in the original so that I could too. While the author tries to tap - dance around the notion that tradition can be called "holy", he still has to deal with the scripture that says in Matt 15: 6 that for the "sake of your tradition, you make null and void the Word of God."

The Orthodox Church believes that "*salvation begins with these three steps: repent, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...it is an ongoing, lifelong process.*" *Baptism is the way in which a person is actually united to Christ. In it (baptism) our sins are truly forgiven and we are energized by our union with Christ. Nowadays, some consider baptism to be only an "outward sign" of belief in Christ. This innovation has no historical or biblical precedent. The New Birth occurs in baptism. The historically late idea that "being born again" is a religious experience disassociated from baptism has no biblical basis whatsoever.*

While it might upset the Orthodox Church to hear this, their concept of salvation is very similar to Roman Catholicism. Catholics refer to their baptism as the sacrament through which they are "born again" and through which they first receive "sanctifying grace" and are then eligible to keep on "being saved." It was Jesus Himself who told Nicodemus that he must be "born again" and He made no mention of baptism as a prerequisite for salvation. He simply spoke of the type and figure of baptism as a dying and then coming back up to new life in Christ (1Peter 3: 21; Acts 16:31-33; Colossians 2:12).

These Antiochian Evangelical Orthodox billed themselves as the one, true, catholic (small "c"), holy, apostolic church from the time of Pentecost. They even showed us how the Great Schism happened and some went off and became Roman Catholic; and then the even greater schism of the Reformation. Frankly, the only difference I can see is that Roman Catholicism has a Pope. In so many other areas these two "churches" are so similar that they might as well be one. They believe in honoring Mary above others by calling her "blessed" and "the first of the redeemed"; they worship icons – even saying that the "use of icons will keep us from idolatry"; they believe in the communion of the saints (living and dead), and a host of other things Roman Catholic. *The Orthodox Church has always followed the New Testament practices of confession before a priest.* Catholics do that; my New Testament church does not and I would leave if it started to engage in that practice because James 4:16 says "Confess your sins one to another" not to a priest.

In all this twisting of Scripture and double-speak, there was one other topic that I was glad I had printed literature about so that I could be absolutely certain that what I thought I heard that night was indeed true. There are many things in my Catholic background that I look at and grieve over even though they were done in my ignorance. What is done in the Roman Catholic Church in regard to Communion is something that causes all of us who are former Catholics deep pain. The Orthodox Church stops short of what the Roman Catholics believe...but the essence is there:

The Eucharist, according to Catholicism, makes the Catholic more like Christ, for "partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ has no less effect than to change us into what we have received" (Catechism of Catholic Church)

*(In the Evangelical Orthodox Church) In the Eucharist we partake mystically of Christ's Body and Blood, which imparts His life and strength to us. Early Christians began calling the Eucharist "the medicine of immortality" because they recognized the great grace of God that was received in it. There is more here than just the "do this in remembrance of Me" and the taking of the elements. Roman Catholicism believes that a mystery occurs and the bread and wine become "the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus*

Christ" and that is why they believe they are changed into what they receive. As a true Christian can you read that last sentence and not want to bow your head in deep shame and denial that anyone would ever think that way? Therefore, the "comfort" we receive from knowing that the Orthodox Church doesn't believe to that degree may assuage some consciences. But can we live with the thought that Communion is "mystically imparted so that we may impart of His life and strength and look upon it as the medicine of immortality?"

Do either of those explanations square with the scriptures in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Do it in remembrance of Him, nothing more. It's all He meant for it to be.

How far from Biblical Authenticity this has come! We now have Ancient-Future Heresies that Journey to the Past to find Future Spirituality.

**Discernment Ministries, Inc.**