

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**C0918 – May 6, 2009 – Justification By Faith & Emerging Church
Movement - Part 2**

We live in interesting times. The Bible describes it as the “end-times”, and though it is true that the “end-times” began after Christ’s Ascension and have continued for nearly 2000 years, we see more clearly in our day just how closely the world systems are uniting from a global respect because of organizations like:

World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, World Bank, World Council of Churches, United Nations, and now, the call for one world currency.

Since the development and spread of the Internet, particularly in the mid 1990’s, the world has gained a global voice with this quick communications and information vehicle. The “information highway” has provided “point and click” world wide shopping, a world of information on any subject, world wide emailing, and a platform for spiritual truth as well as for weird ideas and strange ideologies. Add to this the capacity and freedom of the hand held devices. To some, this is just the natural process of “evolution” – man advancing, expanding, achieving, and becoming smarter - in the pursuit of his highest potential. What does the Bible say is going on? These are indicators that the Kingdom of God is near – movement toward one world government, one religion, one currency, one language, etc...

As a personal observation, it seems to me that this is the first time since the Tower of Babel that mankind has had the chance to come together and work together for a common goal; “to make a name for themselves” - to realize “world consciousness” and define good and evil in terms of what seems right in their own eyes.

So, as the Age of Grace comes to an end, we see God’s Viewpoint diminished and Autonomous Man’s viewpoint more prevalent, with Satan blurring truth and blending religious thought with political correctness, so that we don’t offend anyone, thus trying to bridge the gap between good and evil which would raise Satan and lower God so that Satan and God would be equal. The Bible clearly states this will never happen, but this is Satan’s desire.

In our politically correct society of today, relativity thrives; “your truth is your truth” and “my truth is my truth”. There are “many ways to God and salvation”. Churches have an Equal Employment Opportunity hiring policy, with a motto of “open doors, open hearts, open minds”, and are run as a business. They make the congregation feel good about themselves, and where “how to” and psychology books prevail.

Seminaries are teaching heresy, and/or teaching “confessions” from the 16th & 17th century. Success is measured by quantity not quality. People can no longer articulate the gospel message, and the word “Christian” is misused to describe “good” people. .

The bottom line is: The Bible is not accepted as the Word of God. This is what the Bible-believing Christian is faced with today.

Satan understands that he doesn’t have much time left, so I can understand why Emerging Church Movement, Mysticism, Contemplative Spirituality, Social Gospel, “experience” over Biblical “doctrine”, the desire for images and external forms of spirituality are such a part of this generation’s drive for being “authentic”. It lines up with the desire to become or be seen as a “spiritual” person.

Overview of the Emerging Church

“Churchless”	New Spirituality
Relative truth	“Kingdom Now” theology
Experience over doctrine	Social Gospel
Distain for Biblical fundamentalists	Inclusive Gospel
Multi-sensory worship	Religious neutrality
Universalism	Diverse
“Cosmic Christ”	Contextual theology
Beyond Christianity	A Global community
Mysticism	

Last time, as we looked at the “emerging church movement” we learned that: It is “churchless” – aiming at the “30 and under” crowd disenchanted with traditional Protestant churches that they see as “outmoded”, “outdated”, & dying.

It is “searching” for the truth through dialogue and “conversation”, because no one can know all the truth.

It desires experience over doctrine.

It has great distain for those read the Bible literally, are pro-Israel, and read/study end-time prophecy.

It desires to experience God through the use of candles, icons, music, incense, etc.

In general, it believes that Christ died for all – therefore all are saved, believer and unbeliever alike.

They believe in a “Cosmic Christ” that is in everyone’s “un-awakened” consciousness, believer or non believer, and is above all religions including Christianity.

They practice contemplative meditation (mysticism) in the desire to become mystics.

They are seeking a “new spirituality” in order to “experience” God.

They believe in “Kingdom Now” theology.

They want to be authentic and relevant – through missional social activities.

They believe in an “inclusive” Gospel, therefore diversity is key.

They believe that Scripture should be discussed to come to a consensus of what is meant.

They believe that they are part of a “global community”.

EPIC:

E = Experiential

P = Participatory

I = Image-rich

C = Connective

Buzz words include:

The need to be “genuine”

The need to be “authentic”

The need to be “real”

The need to be “in the moment”

The need to get “in touch”

The need to be “relevant”

The need to be “connected”

The need to be conscious of the “now”

Unsaved are described as “unchurched”

We saw that this is wrapped up in the acrostic EPIC: **E** = Experiential **P** = Participatory

I = Image-rich **C** = Connective

Buzz words of the “new spirituality” in the Emerging Church are: “genuine”, “authentic”, “in the moment”, “in touch”, “relevant”, “connected”, and be conscious of the “now”. Also the unsaved are described as “unchurched”.

The Emerging Church Movement leaders say the Christian faith needs to be reinvented or re-imagined for the 21st century. They insist that a new faith and a new kind of church must be established in order to reach this generation. They would describe the current faith as not authentic. They

would tell you that today's Christianity is too individualistic (not communally minded enough), putting too much emphasis on a heavenly, eternal kingdom and not enough on the kingdom of God on earth here and now. They would tell you the emerging church can offer to humanity an authentic, organic, and real faith, since what we now know is outdated, irrelevant, and ineffective.

Christ-follower or Christian?

Jesus is seen as a model, an example to be followed and mimicked.

The term – follower of Christ (or Christ-follower) – is used frequently within the scope of those promoting emerging spirituality. Rick Warren has the term throughout his pastors.com website.

The idea behind being a Christ-follower as opposed to a Christian can be seen in the spiritual formation movement (contemplative prayer movement). That is, if you want to be like Christ, then practice certain disciplines and you can be *like* Him. Chuck Swindoll says the spiritual disciplines can help you “become like Christ.” Richard Foster teaches that anyone, not just believers, can practice these spiritual disciplines and become *like* Christ.

In my research, I went to Mars Hill's website to look at their theology.

Here's what I found for the introduction to their theology.

“When we put to words what we believe about God, we discover that he has been writing a story of hope and redemption for all the world. His story is a movement from creation to new creation, and he has given us a role to play in that story, in the restoration of our relationships with God, each other, ourselves, and creation.

Since story is central to our belief about God, our words about God—our theology—exists in the form of a narrative. You won't find isolated text references or a list of specific propositions in it, because ultimately neither of those things best reflects what we believe about God. What we believe about God is at the heart of what we believe also about each other, ourselves, and creation: that ultimately everything is part of the one great story.”

In their theology “narrative”, I read this about their thoughts about Jesus:

Why We Need Discernment

“.....Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted and set captives free, proclaiming a new arrival of the kingdom of God, bringing about a new exodus, and restoring our fractured world. He and his message were rejected by many as he confronted the oppressive nature of the religious elite and the empire of Rome. Yet his path of suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection has brought hope to all creation. Jesus is our only hope for bringing peace and reconciliation between God and humans. Through Jesus we have been forgiven and brought into right relationship with God. God is now reconciling us to each other, ourselves, and creation.....”

www.marshall.org

“.....Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted and set captives free, proclaiming a new arrival of the kingdom of God, bringing about a new exodus, and restoring our fractured world. He and his message were rejected by many as he confronted the oppressive nature of the religious elite and the empire of Rome. Yet his path of suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection has brought hope to all creation. Jesus is our only hope for bringing peace and reconciliation between God and humans. Through Jesus we have been forgiven and brought into right relationship with God. God is now reconciling us to each other, ourselves, and creation.....”

Some of that sounds very close to something we might buy into, but let's see if we discern these ideas in the above:

Kingdom now

Jesus – is this the “Cosmic” Christ”?

What “hope” does Jesus bring? Universal reconciliation - Universalism

Missional social gospel (social action)

“New exodus”: Israel is replaced

Since we are all saved, go to your Hindu or Buddhist friend and explain that he, too, is forgiven and reconciled to “God” and that he can stay a Hindu or Buddhist, but add Jesus to his other gods.

“House church” is promoted by some of the emerging church movement leaders. Mars Hill's website offers an explanation of what a house church is, and how to start your own house church.

“The typical size of a House Church is six to 12 people. These groups can have many purposes: studying Scripture, praying, sharing books and ideas, discussing current topics, laughing, playing, eating, resting, offering support and encouragement, and serving others.

Each House Church has a House Church Facilitator who, with guidance and support from one of our staff Community Life Pastors, works to help coordinate how the group functions and gathers.

The best way to join a House Church is to participate in one of our "House Church—Connect" cycles. These four-week cycles form new groups by identifying and bringing together people with similar priorities, then guiding those groups through a journey of exercises and activities that will prepare them to function together as a healthy House Church.” (www.marshall.org)

Tonight, we want to look at some more emergent church leaders and influencers, look at Ecumenism, and the Eucharistic Evangelization movement.

Let me start with another word from the emerging church leader Brian McLaren regarding the subject of “truth”. He writes in his book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, "To be a Christian in a generously orthodox way is not to claim to have the truth captured, stuffed, and mounted on the wall. It is rather to be in a loving (ethical) community of people who are seeking the truth (doctrine) on the road of mission..."

Ryan Bolger and Eddie Gibbs **Emerging Church Advocates**

The Inclusive Gospel.

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger (both are at Fuller Theological Seminary) are the co-authors of *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*. Through their five years of research, they provide an overview of the nine patterns they see unfolding in emerging churches. One of the trends they see is in evangelism, where it “involves sharing the deep experiences of life with those outside the faith.” They found that emerging church leaders are not impressed with Christians who defend the faith by offering definitive answers to those who doubt the faith. They write: “Christians can not truly evangelize unless they are prepared to be evangelized in the process.... Christians can learn a lot from other walks of life.” Another emergent advocate, Spenser Burke explains: “The Christian tradition could hold to an inclusive model, not an exclusive one. We have a community hermeneutic. We read other sacred writings, then get back to Scripture and decide together how to interpret what we have read from the literature that other religions hold to be sacred.” Gibbs and Bolger comment on Burke’s inclusive view:

“.....Burke celebrates the many ways God is revealed. He recognizes that the Spirit has been with these people all along.....With a focus on kingdom rather than on church, people find that their relationship with other faiths change.”

Scot McKnight **Emerging Church Influence**

He is the author of more than twenty books, including the award-winning *The Jesus Creed* and *The Real Mary*.

McKnight thinks: “that what the emerging Christians bring to the table is vital for the overall health of the church”

He is an influence in the emerging church movement of the Eucharistic focus in terms of Eucharistic liturgy.

On the Gospel, McKnight says “Any gospel that is not announcing a new society at work in the world, what the apostle Paul called the church, is simply not a robust gospel.”

From Christianity Today: an article entitled *Your Atonement Is Too Small*, writer David Neff, comments on McKnight’s book, **A Community Called Atonement**. Neff writes,

“Scot McKnight wants you to have your golf bag fully equipped—theologically speaking. That's the controlling metaphor of McKnight's 2007 study of soteriology, *A Community Called Atonement* (4 stars).

Here's how the metaphor works. Each ‘theory’ of the Atonement is, like a particular golf club, better suited to some situations than others. Ministering the gospel is like playing a round of golf. Just as a golfer knows when to use a driver, a wedge, or a putter, the way we proclaim, teach, or share the Good News should be adapted to the situation.....

The strength of the golf-bag metaphor is that it asks us to stop being partisan toward one particular theory of the Atonement and to minister with the best tools at hand. McKnight is a peacemaker and a bridge builder, which makes his book welcome.”

Brennan Manning **Emerging Church Influence**

Formerly a Franciscan priest, Manning earned degrees in Philosophy and theology. After being treated for alcoholism, he left the Order in 1982.

Married, divorced, but still popular as a writer and speaker.

Here’s a critique of Manning in an article entitled, *Beware of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing* by evangelist Mike Gendron. He writes,

-The teachings of Manning are charming, seductive, cunning and dangerous as he takes advantage of his undiscerning audiences. He teaches that you can overcome fear, guilt and psychological hang-ups, even alcoholism, through meditation. His meditation techniques are drawn from a mixture of eastern mysticism, psychology, the New Age Movement and Catholicism. Manning gives the impression that he has a very intimate relationship with God and reports having many visions, encounters and conversations with Him. He assures his audiences that if they apply his teachings, they too can become more intimate with God.... Manning overemphasizes the love and grace of God while ignoring His attributes of justice, righteousness and holiness. He teaches that Jesus has redeemed all of mankind. His "good news" is that everyone is already saved.-
www.reachingcatholics.org

Tony Jones
Emerging Church Leader

He received his *M.Div.* from Fuller Theological Seminary and a *Ph.D.* (A.B.D. = All But Dissertation) from Princeton Theological Seminary, in practical theology.

His dissertation topic: *the relational ecclesiology of the emerging church movement.*

He is the author of many books on Christian ministry and spirituality, and he is a sought after speaker and consultant in the areas of emerging church, postmodernism, and Christian spirituality.

He is currently listed as: Theologian-in-Residence at Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, Doug Pagitt is pastor there.

He says, "I'm going to keep theologizing about ways to affirm historic, orthodox Christianity while undermining the historic Christian perspectives on social issues like slavery, the role of women, and homosexual rights."

On the Atonement, he writes:

"Some people today may find it compelling that some Great Cosmic Transaction took place on that day 1,980 years ago, that God's wrath burned against his son instead of against me. I find that version of atonement theory neither intellectually compelling, spiritually compelling, nor in keeping with the biblical narrative."

Tony is well respected among emergent leaders and is a force in this movement.

His academic teaching and speaking engagements are quite impressive. They include 26 Colleges and universities, including Baylor University, Alliance Theological Seminary, Bethel Theological Seminary, Luther

Seminary, 3 Nazarene Universities, Princeton Theological University, Pepperdine University, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Erwin McManus
Emerging Church Leader

Born in 1958, Raphael Sandoval Meza Cardona, McManus is a native of El Salvador. His family immigrated to the United States when he was very young and he was raised in Florida.

Regarding the name, "McManus", "it is not an adopted name, it's an alias and I made it legal ... My mom married someone who lived under an alias who was involved in 'creative underground economies' ... that's how we ended up being called McManus."

He is an author, lecturer, pastor and leader in the emerging church movement. McManus is the lead pastor of Mosaic Church, a Christian community in Los Angeles, California.

He made his name first by speaking on Post-modernism, but also communicates on culture, change, creativity, and leadership. McManus was named by Church Report in January 2007 as one of the "50 Most Influential Christians in America."

He earned his B.A. from the University of North Carolina and his M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

McManus was instrumental in organizing the "Rethink" conference saying "We need to know where things are going so we can get there first" and he says, "The greatest enemy to the movement of Jesus Christ is Christianity." McManus has introduced various psychological personality metrics to the church. He has also founded *Awaken*, a collection of poets, artists, film makers and humanitarians whose stated goal is "maximizing the divine potential" in every human being.

McManus has written at least 9 books, and produced 2 films.

Robert Webber
Ancient-Future Worship Promoter

In 1993 he founded the *Institute for Worship Studies* in Jacksonville, Florida. The institute is the only one of its kind in the United States to focus exclusively on worship education. It offers both masters and doctoral degree programs in worship studies.

Perhaps best known for promoting the use of early church practices in contemporary congregations.

His Ancient-Future Worship model, initially rejected by many, has now become widely influential in evangelical churches (and picked up by the emerging church movement).

“Ancient-Future” means – in order to go ahead, we need to go back to the mystics and learn from them. He believed in the Bible + theory. Webber writes,

“The primary source of spiritual reading is the Bible. But we now recognize that in our love of scripture we dare not avoid the mystics and the activists. Exposure to the great devotional literature of the church is essential. More and more people are turning to the great works of the mystics. Richard Foster has called us to recover Augustine’s *Confessions*, Bernard of Clairvaux’s *The Steps of Humility*, etc. (from his book *Ancient-Future Faith*).

Webber’s list of recommended books written by mystics includes: Thomas a Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton, and numerous others. All these names have something in common – they are Catholic mystics....Webber continues: “To immerse ourselves in these great works is to allow our vision to be expanded by a great treasure of spirituality.”

Neale Donald Walsch **Emerging Church Influence**

We met this man earlier in our study of mysticism. He was born in 1943. Walsch's vision is an expansion and unification of all present theologies to render them more relevant to our present day and time.

He writes, “I am the author of a series of books known as the *Conversations with God* series. This series explains and encourages what I have come to call the “new Spirituality”.

Among other things, it teaches that there are no villains and no victims in the world, that there is no such thing as "right" and "wrong," and that we are all One.

It also says that if we *acted* as if we were all one, most of the ills of human society would disappear over night.”

Roger Oakland, author of *Faith Undone* comments: “the emerging church is the bridge between Christianity and this ‘new spirituality.’ And the question that every Christian must ask themselves is, is this a bridge on which I am willing to walk and eventually cross?”

Will Samson Emerging Church Advocate

Will Samson is part of an emerging community in Kentucky called *communality*.

He also serves on the Coordinating Group of Emergent Village, which is the group that formed out of the Young Leaders Network. The organization's website, www.emergentvillage.com, is a strong and influential presence on the Internet.

Samson authored *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* in which he writes "A rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation was sola scriptura, Scripture alone. And while this doctrine may have arisen as a necessary corrective to abuses of church leadership in the Reformation period, it is in full effect today. Preachers speak of the Bible as an instruction book or as the only data necessary for spiritual living. But this diminishes some critical elements of theological knowledge. ... Sola scriptura also tends to downplay the role of God's Spirit in shaping the direction of the church.

Samson says that people who fall into this category 'do not take into account the subjectivity of human interpreters.' In other words, those men who penned Scripture may not have been that inspired after all. It could have been more a case of their point of view based on their own life experiences." Regarding doctrinal truths of the Bible, Samson says the "notion of being able to join the work of God simply through belief statements has had a negative impact on the health of the church."

On the subject of the Protestant Reformation, Samson writes, "Another major delta in the church, the Protestant Reformation, the belief in justification by faith alone caused large parts of the church to split off from what was the global unified church." Samson continues, "Some would agree that these splits were necessary to correct false understandings of what it means to be the people of God.... So if by our actions we say that being right is more important than being together, what does this say about the God who formed our communities or how God wishes to interact with contemporary humanity?"

Ecumenism

The people in the emerging church movement want “unity” in the worst way. That’s why they are so inclusive, because the more diverse people they can dialogue with, the more they think they are learning “truth”.

**Goal: Ecumenism
(inclusivism - sincerity)**

The desire for unity overrides the desire for truth!

2nd Evangelicals and Catholics Together meeting - 1995
“We are justified by grace through faith because of Christ”

Parachurch ministries make a contribution to the ecumenism:

Campus Crusade

InterVarsity

Young Life

Focus on the Family

Promise Keepers

Prison Fellowship

The Navigators

“Sharing Christ’s love”

Ecumenism is the seeking out of doctrines, traditions, ministries that religious groups have in common, and focusing on these to the exclusion of the doctrines, traditions, and ministries previously at odds with one another. It is the accommodating in the give and take in order to come together in unity.

Pietism, Pentecostalism, Charismatics, many Evangelicals, Emerging church groups, and Para-churches all desire personal experience over doctrine, and tend to want to unify the many into one. Eventually this will happen. The closer the various churches get to the subjective (within “me”, “my” encounter, “my” spirituality) the closer they get to reuniting with the Roman Catholic Church.

Eucharist Evangelization movement.

The Catholic Church plans to establish the kingdom of God on earth and win the world to the Catholic Jesus, that is, the Eucharistic Christ

In **April of 2003**, Pope John Paul II wrote an encyclical promoting the “New Evangelism” program for the purpose of “re-kindling amazement” for the Eucharist.

In **October of 2004**, John Paul II initiated “The Year of the Eucharist” as part of his evangelistic plan to bring the world to the Eucharistic Christ.

In **April of 2005**, Pope Benedict XVI called the “faithful to intensify” devotion to the Eucharistic Jesus, and said the Eucharist is the “heart of Christian life.”

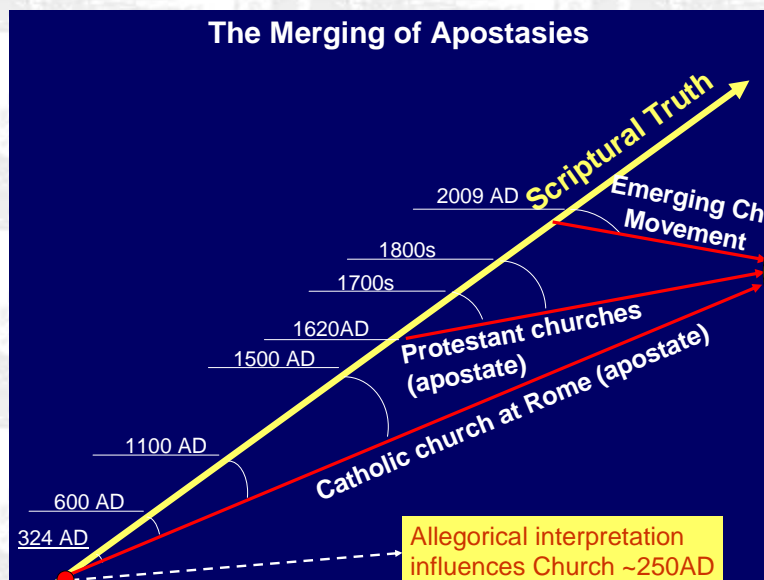
An address given in **March 2009**, Benedict XVI said (through translation): “In the Eucharist we experience the fundamental transformation of violence into love, of death into life; the Body and Blood of Christ are offered so that we ourselves may in turn be transformed....The Pope requested that Eucharist adoration be intensified through a greater awareness of this mystery.....”

With the call for “Vintage Christianity” and with the emphasis on powerful mystical experiences to bring them closer to Christ, the emerging church movement could well be poised to accept the Eucharist Christ as the “Cosmic Christ” they believe in.

So, too, with the increased acceptance of mysticism and an attraction to imagery within evangelical circles, many evangelical Christians would find nothing wrong with the Eucharist and Eucharistic adoration.

Rome believes that they have the answers these groups seek: mysticism, contemplative prayer, icons, incense, candles, ancient liturgy (Vintage Christianity), the Eucharist Christ, and would gladly merge the emerging church movement into their fold; and would, likewise, welcome back “the separated brethren” from Protestantism. And then we would have one big happy family of apostates.

Here’s what’s taking place:



Apostasy comes in many forms – but it always starts with the misinterpretation of Scripture. Hence the need for proper hermeneutics, the principles and rules of interpretation, and they must be applied consistently. This is the cause of apostasy. Once you misinterpret Scripture, or make Scripture say what you want it to say, you’ve turned to error. That’s what

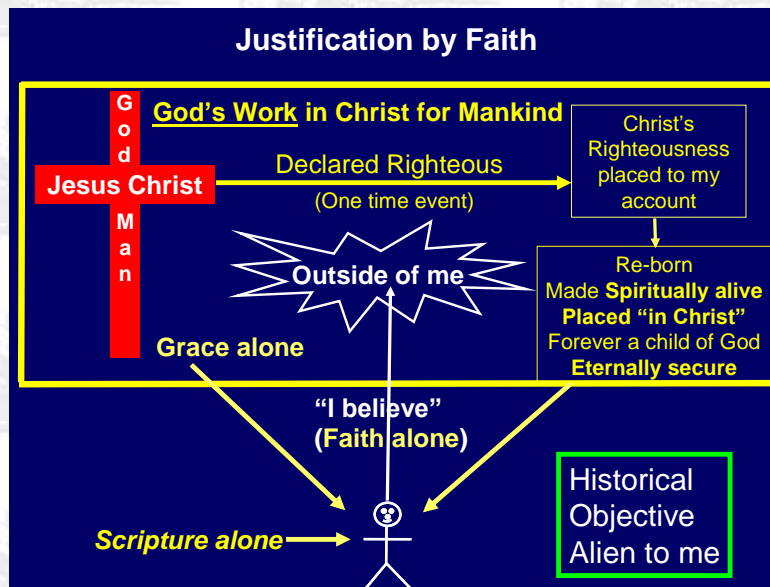
apostasy is, a turning from the objective truth of the Bible to an interpretation that leads us down a path of a different gospel, a different Christ.

Coming from a Catholic background, my ears had to get used to “Protestant” talk, and I’ve had to reinterpret or redefine certain terms, and learn the meaning of new terms. Those of you with the same background know what I’m talking about. Coming to terms with the doctrine of Justification by Faith and learning the implications of such a wonderful and foundational doctrine has been a pursuit of mine. What I’m seeing upon reflection, is that over the years, many evangelicals have been persuaded by well meaning, but Biblically unsound pastors and teachers, that to be “saved” that you must 1) Let Christ come into your heart, 2) that by your efforts (“confess your sins”) you make Him Lord of your life, 3) that you desire a “personal relationship” with Christ, 4) that you “come to Christ” for forgiveness, 5) that you “commit” your life to Christ as you walk the aisle.

This, to me, is internalizing or making the objectivity of the Gospel subjective. This is the same thing I see in the emerging church movement with their efforts to become good mystics. They are trying to get in touch with the “God who is in everyone and everything”. Therefore, mantras, New Age practices are just means to an end – coming into contact with that “spark of God” within every human. On the evangelical side; devotional practices, church traditions, spiritual reading material, selection of religious music, religious TV programs, can be means to an end to feel good about yourself that you’ve been “in touch” with God. I’m not condemning these things, but I am warning us to be careful to remember that Justification by Faith is an objective, forensic, and legal declaration of innocence (being made just before God) based on one thing only – Faith – belief in the propositions, i.e. certain truths brought forth from Scripture for our consideration. These truths are presented to us and we can either accept or reject them. But notice; there is no looking inward. It is a looking outward to the truths presented to us from Scripture. I’m afraid what has happened is that many people who have internalized the salvation message, have continued to nurture the subjectiveness of a “spiritual life” in the Sanctification process.

Each Biblical truth set aside, each movement away from proper hermeneutics, each Biblical doctrine set aside for a mystical experience, each “internalization” of an objective truth of the gospel, is a movement toward apostasy – making the objective subjective.

That’s why I entitled this *Justification by Faith and the Emerging Church Movement*, and the teaching on Mysticism was entitled *Justification by Faith and Mysticism*.



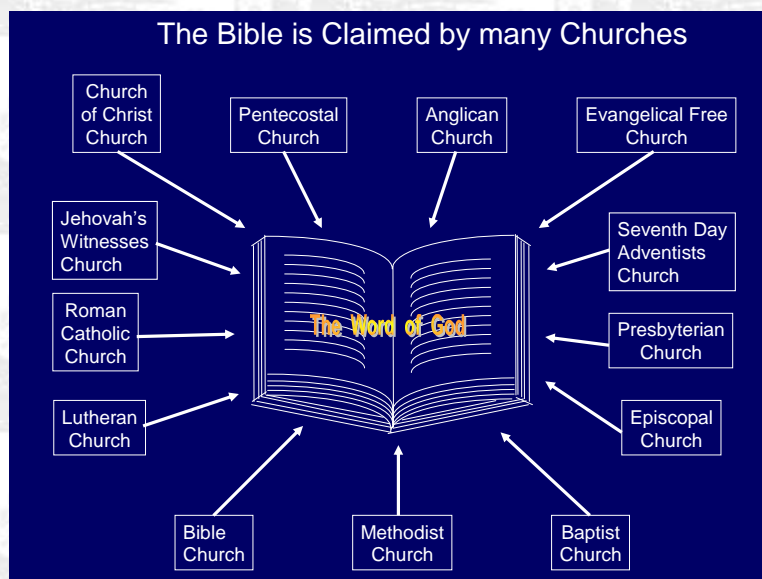
Justification by Faith is just that – we are declared “just” or have right standing before an all holy God by believing, or accepting the objective proposition that the Father sent His only Son to take on human nature, becoming God-Man, and in obedience to the Father, have every human sin imputed to Him and die on the Cross as a substitute for us. Where in this do you find private subjectivity? This is a fact that has already happened, in history, outside of me. I can only look back on that act and believe it to be true. That is what justifies me before God. It’s not my righteousness, but Christ’s righteousness that pleases the Father, it’s not my life, but Christ’s death that propitiates the Father’s wrath. I simply believe that what He said He did (in Scripture) is what actually took place. Then, as I learn more from biblical teaching, I begin to understand more of what happened at that moment of “faith alone in Christ alone”. I begin to appreciate the doctrines of Substitutionary Atonement, Redemption, Reconciliation, and Propitiation. The pieces begin to come together as I study the events of Creation, Fall, Flood, New World Covenant, and the other events of Scripture. I begin to see that God is truly in control (Sovereign) and that history has meaning, purpose and direction, and I am overwhelmed by God’s gracious plan of salvation. Now, sanctification makes sense. It is the response of loyal obedience of the believer for the gifts of grace received undeservedly. It’s a constant reflection of the gifts received at salvation and responding in gratitude to the commands of Scripture.

On the basis of grace, we are saved by faith alone and we are justified. So it is in Sanctification, again on the basis of grace, we live by faith (alone) and not by sight, always looking to Scripture for the principles by which to live our lives. I’m still the sinner I was 2 minutes after I was “saved”. I have no righteousness of my own. I can only be grateful for the salvation that God has granted me through believing (faith) in what Christ has done outside of me. I

will continue to study to understand this doctrine of Justification by Faith because I believe it is that which must be reflected upon to support our faith during the sanctification process. This is our positional truth.

As long as Satan can keep people from finding Biblical Truth (objectivity) and turn people in on themselves by looking for the “divine” within them (subjectivity) and doing human good (social gospel), then he has been successful. The “God” they seek to have union with will not be the God of the Bible, it will be the god of this world. The truth they seek will not be Biblical doctrine, but their own experience, based on urges, intuition, and feelings which they call spiritual living, i.e. “being in touch with God”. Man is once again being lied to by Satan in thinking that he can come to God on his own terms! That he can eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and be like God. Theologically, Satan is using the “hermeneutics of life”, that is, the interpretation of life by the world’s viewpoint, to lead men away from the truths that God has written out in Scripture.

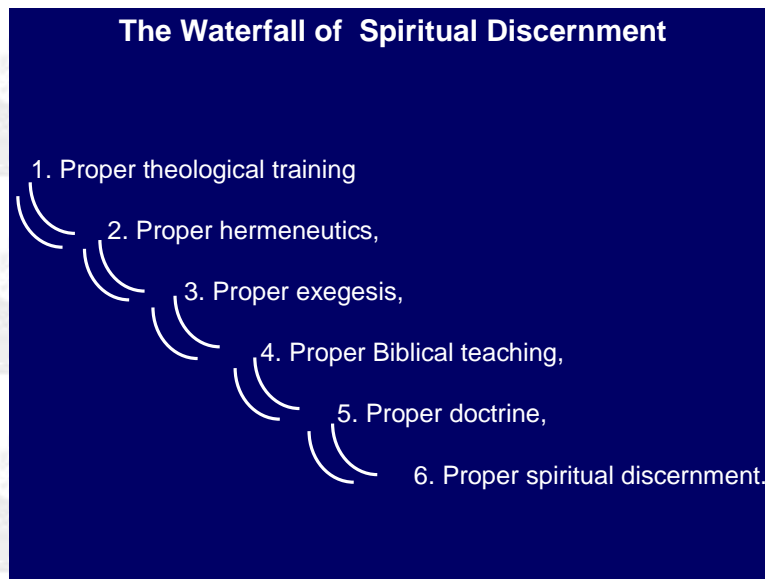
Until we grasp the principles behind Justification by Faith (Positional truth) and accept the objectivity and permanency of the doctrine of Justification by Faith we will continue look for devotionals, books, articles, teachers, and churches that make us feel good about our pursuit of a subjective relationship.



When we look at the churches within our own community, each one, in their own way, claims to get their doctrine or mission statement, or statement of beliefs from a book called “the Bible”, which they believe to be the Word of God. Is this not true? Well, let me ask you a question: Can all these Churches be correct? You say no? Why not? Doesn’t it come down to Hermeneutics – the

rules and principles of interpretation that each church applies (or not) to what they read in their “Bible”? Some will not talk to you unless you can produce a “proof text”. I agree with Charles Ryrie: “Proof texts must be used properly, just as footnotes must be. They must actually be used to mean what they say, and they must not be used out of context....” Some of these churches will interlace the Bible with their founder’s writings or some “confession” of the 16th or 17th century.

So, it becomes very important to discover how a church, an author, a speaker, a theologian, even a Bible translator board, has been influenced by affiliation or seminary training.



If people are not properly trained at the seminary level, how can they learn the proper rules and principles for interpreting? If they can’t interpret correctly, there is no exegesis. With no exegesis, there is no proper Biblical teaching. Without proper Biblical teaching, we learn no correct doctrine. And without correct doctrine, how can you be discerning?

Remember, discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between what is right and wrong; it is telling the difference between right and almost right.

[Back To The Top](#)

