

The Emerging Church - Departing From the Word

by Joe Focht

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in the literal meaning of the Word of God and avoiding omissions and additions to the text.

Duration: 50:24

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "False Teaching", "Biblical Integrity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker criticizes a preacher who promises material blessings to those who have suffered in New Orleans. The speaker questions the validity of such promises and expresses confusion over the preacher's message. He also mentions the importance of making people feel welcome in church and not having an arrogant attitude. The sermon concludes with a prayer for pastors to prioritize their time with the Word of God and for others to dedicate themselves to studying the Bible and prayer.

Transcript

I want to address some things in regards to the emerging church slash the emergent church. By observation, I have been concerned about just some of these things, watching them. We have some resources back there.

D. A. Carson's book, *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church*, is something to take advantage of. Roger Oakland's video, I think, is important in regards to the darker side of this issue. As I look at the church in America, you know, there's kind of three prongs to this emerging thing.

One is the very slick, savvy, rear screen projection, you know, million dollar operation, home entertainment center, to keep people's attention. And I'm not against tools, and I think that those things can be important and used well if they are an addendum to the word of God. I think the problem is that we can be loaded for bear on the horizontal, and we can be lacking the vertical.

When I think of Moody, and I think of Whitfield, and I think of Spurgeon, I think of men that touched entire cities, entire countries, entire continents, without any of that stuff. I know in my own life, I think, Lord, what I'm lacking is on the vertical. We got lots going on the horizontal in Calvary, Philly.

And when I look at what's going on in people's lives, when I look at the young people, what they're struggling with, my estimation of that situation is, Lord, if Spurgeon was in this pulpit, or if Whitfield was here, how different would this church be? And it's, Lord, let your word be alive to me, Lord. Let the vertical of all of this be alive and effective in my life. So I think that's one prong, just getting so consumed with the horizontal.

Another prong of this whole emergent thing to me is, and it's concerning, and I want to address it specifically in regards to the word today, there's a devaluing of the holiness and of the sovereignty of God, almost a pushing aside of that. But the truth is, God is holy, and God is sovereign. And I believe he's sovereign today.

And because his holiness and his sovereignty is devalued, the natural next step is, there's a devaluing of his word. It's the word of a holy God. And there is a devaluing of that word, and of course, often experience being put in the place of truth, particularly in regards to, you know, monks and meditative practices from the 3rd century and 4th century and 16th century, instead of the truth of God's word.

Looking back to a time in the church when they loved the fact that the people didn't have the word of God in their hand, and they were more tuned in to relics and incense and those kinds of things, and the church was happy that you and I did not have a copy of the Bible. And it's a wonder to me that people would look back to that and not look all the way back three, four centuries past that to the book of Acts, to the truth of God's word. And then I think there's also a dark side of the whole thing, a bridge probably from Laodicea to the great whore, ultimately, as time goes on.

Because there's a devaluing of God's holiness, of his word, then there's a devaluing of the central message of the word of a holy God, which is the cross of Jesus Christ, and the blood of Jesus Christ. And because that's devalued, there's whole issues of sin and hell. Greg talked about it last night.

Sexuality. All kinds of things are accepted because the truths of those things are set aside. And my concern is what's happening in the church in regards to these things.

In an interview, Mark Driscoll asked Robbie Zacharias, this is just two months ago, he says, as we talked, I asked him what issues were of the greatest concern to him and what he was preparing to focus on in the coming year, 2006. Much to my surprise, he said the emerging church was a great concern to him because it held a low view of truth and was gaining momentum as a gathering point for all kinds of aberrant Christian doctrinal agendas. His main concern, the emerging church.

Now, we tried to get him here. He's booked up ahead of time. We tried to get him for the West Coast Conference.

We couldn't get him. But his concern, that's what he says openly. The emergent church.

Low view of truth. God's word under attack. No surprise because Paul says to us here, I charge thee, therefore, before God and before the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, that should be enough to get our attention right off the bat, at his appearing and at his kingdom, preach the word.

Be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust, they shall heap unto themselves teachers having itching ears. The time will come is the challenge that Paul puts out. So it's

around us.

He says in the last days, the spirit speaks expressly. Perilous times shall come. There will be those who will be departing from the faith.

Well, not just the last days. Jude, early in the church, says, I was going to write unto you concerning our common faith, but as the spirit impressed my heart, it was needful for me to write to you that you would defend the faith once delivered unto the saints, quickly coming under attack. Here, Paul says again, know this also in the last days, perilous times shall come because of the culture.

And he goes through all of those, what the tone of the culture will be, holding a form of religion, denying the power of it. He says, second Corinthians, you don't have to turn, he says this, therefore, in chapter four, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. It can mean in a false manner, but it's also the word that was used in his day for the watering down of wine that was sold in the market, cutting it.

He's saying, we are not among those who are watering down the truth of the word of God. God has not called us to a ministry like that. So look, I don't want to preach to the choir as we go over these things, but I am in a sense, so this is an exhortation, it's a reminder.

I may mention versions, paraphrases, translations, no offense, that's not my point. I may mention some names, and I don't have anything personally against anybody, and probably if we sat down with some of these individuals and had fellowship and broke bread, we'd say, hey, that's a brother, hey, you know, they really do love Christ. But underneath of all of that, as I watch, I think there's an erosion of the word of God across the board, and it's inside the church.

And I think there's an agenda attached to it. So for you and I, as we look at this, what is the question then as we look at this, not watering down the word of God, is the Bible the word of God? Well, of course, we would all agree that. What authority does it have? What purity is there? How accurate is it? What's been handed to us? The God who inspired it, has he preserved it? If the Bible is not 100% reliable, if it's not 100% pure and accurate, how can we trust it? Did he inspire it and preserve it? If the Bible is 100% reliable, who would change it? If you, you know, get sick, you get the flu, you get strep throat, you have to go to a doctor.

He has to be licensed. There has to be some reliability there. There has to be some, you know, he has to be validated by a medical board.

He's going to write you a prescription to a druggist who has to be trained. And he's going to prescribe something to you that the FDA had to approve of because you're going to ingest it. And it's relative to your health.

As we ingest the word of God, we don't want some generic thing. We want the same purity. We want to know that what we're dealing out is in fact, the word of God.

Now, you all know this, 40 individuals over 1600 years, three different languages, different backgrounds, different strata in their social structures with a single commonality, all claimed inspired by the one true living God. Imagine trying to do that today. Take 40 individuals from our current culture, all speaking the same language, all from American culture, from different backgrounds, and let them write on one

controversial subject and see what kind of coherence there is, what you would get in that book of opinions as you read through that.

But that's what we have in the scripture. Integrity. You know, the oldest copies of the Old Testament we had for centuries from the Masorites who had committed themselves to track the Old Testament scripture and copy it with accuracy.

The oldest complete book of Isaiah, oldest complete Old Testament, 900 AD, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, which are over a thousand years older, and they're exactly the same. And it speaks to us of the integrity of the text. And should we be surprised by that? They went to great, the Old Testament scribes, the Jews understood the importance of copying the scripture.

There was a numerical value attached to all of the letters. At the end of a scroll, if it didn't add up, they destroyed it and started over again. And we owe them, in a sense, for their integrity in the way that they did that.

It tells us this in the book of Proverbs, every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and you be found a liar.

Every word is pure, refined as in a fire. Don't add to his word, it tells us here. It tells us in Psalms, chapter 12, the 12th Psalm, verse 6, the words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Purified seven times. Paul, writing to Timothy again, says this, but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. He says this, that from a child thou hast known the holy scripture.

Hare grammata. It was a word that was used in regards to the Old Testament. Timothy wasn't raised on the New Testament, he was raised on the Old Testament.

And Paul says that integrity in the Old Testament was able to make you wise unto salvation. He moves to the next word and he changes where he says all scripture, there he says pasagrafe, all writings, which was the term they used to include the new writings, the New Testament. He says all the writings are God breathed, literally.

The writings are God breathed, the New Testament. Isaiah says, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God abideth forever. How pure is it today? The word of our God abideth forever.

Jesus, when tempted by the devil, said, man does not live by bread alone, but by every, that's an important word, but by every word of God. By every word of God. You know, I'm reading a King James Bible, don't hold it against me.

1,189 chapters, 31,175 verses, 810,697 words. Every word Jesus said. How about letters? 3,568,489 letters, free information.

What about every letter? Is that important? Jesus says this in Matthew. He says, for verily I say unto you, that heaven and earth, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. One yod, smallest letter in the Hebrew, but it's actually just a mark.

One yod, one tittle. He says the markings bear out the integrity of the Old Testament text. This is Jesus saying this.

Not one jot, not tittle. I didn't say it. Jesus said that.

And why is he saying that? You know, he will come to an argument with a lawyer, and the lawyer will say, what's the great commandment? And you know this in Matthew 20. He goes through that, the greatest commandment. And then the Pharisees are there, and he looks at this lawyer.

When you're arguing with a lawyer, you need to know what you're talking about. And he says to this lawyer and these Pharisees, let me ask you a question. Christ, whose son is he? Well, he's David's son.

Well, really, then how is it that David says when he prophesies by the Spirit, the Lord said unto my Lord, that's one letter. My. Yod.

One yod, one tittle. How is it then he says that the Lord said unto my Lord, and he says the argument stands or falls on one letter? A yod or a tittle? A yod. Paul tells us something very similar in Galatians when he's arguing about Christ in 3:16, and he says the promise in regards to Christ is in regard to thy seed, not seeds, plural, as of many, but thy seed as of one.

Paul says there the argument stands or falls on whether the word is singular or plural. Whether the word is singular or plural. If that's true, if Jesus holds it in that regard, and Paul holds the word of God in that kind of regard, who would then change things? And why would they do that? I would think there have to be an agenda.

John Stott in his new book called *Between Two Worlds, The Challenge of Preaching Today*, says the preacher with a humble mind will avoid omissions and additions. He must refuse to manipulate the biblical text in order to make it more acceptable to our contemporaries. For to attempt to make it more acceptable really means to make ourselves more acceptable in regards to popularity.

Adding to God's word was the fault of the Pharisees. Subtracting from was the fault of the Sadducees. Jesus himself criticized them both, insisting that the word of God must be allowed to stand by itself without plus or minus, without amplification or modification, supreme and sufficient in its authority.

The modern Pharisees and Sadducees in the church who tamper with the scripture, discarding what they wish was not there, inserting what they wish was there, don't heed the criticisms of Christ. There is, I am afraid, we have to say, a certain arrogance about the theological liberalism which deviates from historic biblical Christianity. And he challenges in our attitude in regards to God's word.

Who would change it? Now look, there's a lot of translations now that are neutral gender because they want to be inclusive. That's kind of what John Stott says. We're going to make, you know, it won't offend anybody.

We want to just let everybody in, one big happy family. And today's NIV. Now look, if you have that, I mean, it's not my point.

What I want you to do is maybe just be aware of the erosion in regards to the word of God. So if you're reading today's NIV and you live by it, you read that. That's fine.

The New Living Translation. I'll pick on today's NIV for reasons. And there are, in today's NIV, there are 3,600 changes, 2,000 from singular to plural, 1,600 gender changes.

And the critics, many of them who worked on the NIV, who are criticizing what's been done to their translation, say those thousands of changes from singular to plural remove the sense of personal responsibility. Where you or somebody in your congregation would sit alone with a Bible and read the text and it would say, man does not live by bread alone. Singular.

Or let, when a man is tempted, don't let him say he's tempted of God from James 12. They say when they are tempted. They change it to plural.

It does something to sit alone with God's word and have it the way the text said it was and let it speak to our hearts. Thousands of changes from singular to plural. Paul says one argument about Christ stands and falls on whether it's singular or plural.

Thousands of changes in these translations, you know. And I think the singular is so important. One of my favorite Psalms, Psalm 119, where David says this, and it's in the singular, and to me it's the vertical of the word of God that we can never lose track of.

He says, teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes. He's saying the vertical of the word of God, how real it is. Yeah, we should study to show ourselves approved.

We're going to talk about that. But there's something about the vertical in regards to the word of God. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it until the end.

Give me, this is a prayer, understanding, and I shall keep thy law. I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me go in the path of thy commandments.

Incline my heart to thy testimonies. He says, turn away my eyes from beholding vanity. Over and over, establish thy word to thy servant.

There is a cry to the vertical in regards to the word of God. Because if you remove the vertical from it, it isn't the word of God. It's a textbook.

And the question then comes, in the translation, there is a challenge between literal equivalency or dynamic equivalency. And this is not my field, I'm not an expert, but literal equivalency is where translators will sit with a Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic manuscript, and they translate best they can literally word for word. And what they're doing is they're respecting the manuscript and deferring to that, not deferring to modern language.

Dynamic equivalency, brilliant men sit, they look at the original languages and say, well, what we need to defer to is our modern language, so when we do the translation, we'll do that respecting the modern language. Now personally, you know, I think read paraphrases, and I do. Read different translations, I do.

Read those things, but as men who teach the word of God, have a translation. Have a translation, an NIV, a New American Standard, and then move to the King James someday. But have a translation that you trust, that you know someone sat and labored to give us the very words, verbal inspiration, the very words

of God.

That's what I want. I don't want somebody telling me what God was trying to say and really couldn't say in my culture. Give me what he said and let it be supernatural.

The vertical of it will take care of that in my life. It's language, and all life is based on language. You know, we're in Genesis, we're studying intelligent design.

All life is based on a language. All of the language in the DNA is lesser and derives from this word of God. Lewis was up here yesterday and told us what happens in his life with leukemia when one chromosome is out of whack.

He loves to mention his Philadelphia chromosome over and over, I don't know why, but one chromosome. So try dynamic equivalency with biology and see what you get. A deformity, a sad situation.

I want somebody telling me what the Bible says, that's what I want. Look, Eugene Peterson, and if you read the message, I have a copy of the message in my office. We don't have it in the bookstore, but I have one in my office.

It's a paraphrase, but I'm so aware of the erosion, I want you to be sensitive to that. Eugene Peterson, in an interview, says this, and he's a Greek scholar, he says it's his second language. The importance of poetry and novels is that the Christian life involves the use of imagination.

After all, we are dealing with the invisible, and imagination is our training in dealing with the invisible, making connections. I don't want to do away with or denigrate theology or exegesis, but our primary allies in this business are the artists. Why do people spend so much time studying the Bible? How much do they need to know? We invest all this time in understanding the text, which has a separate life of its own, and we think we're being more pious or spiritual when we're doing it.

Christians should be studying it less, not more. You just need enough to pay attention to God. I'm just not at all pleased with all this emphasis on Bible study, as though it's some kind of special thing that Christians do, and the more they do, the better.

This is Eugene Peterson. Paul says, study to show thyself approved, a workman of God, rightly dividing the truth. You need not be ashamed.

Over and over, we're told to abide in the word. What do we want our congregations to do? Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase, the message, just interesting, just an aside, do with it what you want. My King James Bible has the word Lord in it 7,970 times.

The message has it in there 71 times. There's 7,989 deletions of the word Lord. Now, sometimes master's plugged in, but I like the Lord for some reason.

The King James Bible, these three words, the Lord Jesus, you'll find those words together 118 times in the New Testament. In the message, you find them zero times. In the King James Bible, you'll find the Lord Jesus Christ, those four words, 84 times.

In the message, you find them zero times. Eugene Peterson, though he doesn't think it's important to study the scripture, is one of the advisors on the Renovere Study Bible. And as I look at this, I'm amazed it's happening in the context, again, I think of being inclusive.

The Bible as it was intended to be, this is an advertisement for it. Like for 1,900 years, we've got it all wrong. A new approach to scripture, it dismisses Genesis chapters 1 to 11 as a collection of myths and folklore handed down by tradition.

Now, Jesus said in the beginning, God made the male and female. He actually thinks, Jesus, that it literally happened. Jesus, when he talks about the flood, talks about a literal occurrence.

When he talks about Abraham, talks about a literal individual. This is folklore. It says here that the new Renovere Study Bible is the most accepted.

Anybody have one of those today? Nobody here has the most accepted Bible? It is the most accurate, the most ecumenical. Ah, there's the agenda. Renovere introduces spiritual disciplines that date back to the early church.

Its main editor, Foster, explaining his view of celebration, writes, we of the new age can risk going against the tide. Let us with abandon see visions and dreams and so forth. Jeremiah says, let the guy with the dream tell his dream, the guy with the vision.

But he who hath my word, let him declare it faithfully, because what is the chaff to the wheat? The arousal of imagination, how important it is. He says this, sadly, the Renovere explanatory notes deny the divine authorship of much of the scripture, even that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, claiming, again, Genesis is all tradition. Denying Isaiah chapter 53, Christ's sacrifice.

Renovere describes the book of Isaiah as poetic imagination. It says that poetry, in poetry, Jeremiah attempted to explain the circumstances of his day through poetry, doing his best to try to explain the circumstances of his day. All of this in the sense of being inclusive.

And look, I've watched some of this and there are things to learn. Don McClure was in a church in the west coast. We talked.

He said, you know, Joe, one of the things I really appreciate about this church is they make people feel welcome. They've done some great things. And he said, you know, sometimes as Calvary, we get an attitude, hey, we teach the word of God.

You should be thankful. Just come in and shut up and sit down. And that's not right.

And, you know, we have a big church and I listened to him. We talked and I thought, you know, it's a great idea. He said, you know, they have people at the doors that greet people.

And I thought, you know, our church, sometimes I see people walking and they look a little lost. So there's a group of women in our church now and they're on fire. They love this ministry.

They stand at the entrances. If they see somebody come in with that forlorn look on their face, you know, they're right there. Can I help you? Here's a map of the building.

Let me take you. This is where the nursery is. And I met and had breakfast with them a week ago.

And it was, you know, we had a men's breakfast first with my home fellowship leaders. It was bacon, ham, eggs. And then I had afterwards the breakfast with the ladies and it was quiche and fruit and just, it's a different world.

But I was full when I got there. But they're so excited. I mean, the one of them said, I saw this lady walking with her kids and she ended up in the overflow room and I saw them leaving.

And she said, a greeter had talked to me. She said, I ran and talked to her. And I said, no, no, I understand.

It's uncomfortable. It's a big overflow. And she said, two weeks later, I looked in the sanctuary at the invitation.

I saw her going forward, her and her husband, and they got saved. One of our gals is a nurse. And she said she met this girl, come in and talk to her here.

She was a nurse. So she had her come and sit with her and her friends where they always sit. And she said the same thing.

At the end of the service, she got up, she went forward, she was saved. So I think it's valid. I think that we should be sensitive to those things.

But it goes to a degree where we want to fill the church with unbelievers. So we're not going to state truth. We don't want any light to shine because they become uncomfortable to the point where some churches are saying, let's sign up the unbelievers and let them serve in the church.

And maybe if we let them serve, they'll feel part of things and they'll become open. I look in the book of Acts and it said to wait on tables. They had to seek out men that were filled with the Holy Ghost, that had tact, that had wisdom, to wait on tables.

How can we invite unbelievers in to serve in the church? The church is the ecclesia, the called out ones. By its own name, it's separate. By its own name.

Moses had nothing but a headache with a mixed multitude. Look, there's this tide. And again, not my, I'm not, believe it or not, denigrating anyone.

Rick Warren, when he was in Philadelphia just a little while ago, and I know Rick's a brother. He said the New Testament says the church is the body of Christ. This is a Philadelphia newspaper that leaves us answering all these questions.

It says, so the church is the body of Christ. But for the last 100 years, the hands and feet have been amputated. The church has been nothing but a mouth for 100 years.

Let me tell you something. In the last 100 years, there have been more martyrs in the church than all of the 19 centuries before that. What about them? In the last 100 years, more copies of the scripture have been distributed than all of the centuries before that.

In the last 100 years, more people have come to know Christ than in all of the centuries before that. And in the last 100 years, more humanitarian hospitals, orphanages have been done in the name of Christ than all of the centuries before that. This is a perspective trying to push something.

He says here he despises fundamentalism. Now I can understand what he's trying to say there, but that says something else to the world. He says this, as powerful as churches can be in working for the powerless, they can't succeed without governments and non-governmental organizations.

Tell that to the Christians that were burned at the stake in Rome. They succeeded without the government. Rome is gone.

The church is still here. Warren predicts that fundamentalism of all varieties will be one of the big enemies of the 21st century. Muslim fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, Jewish fundamentalism, secular fundamentalism, they're all based on fear.

Well, I'm fundamental in what I believe. And in the early part of the last century, some great men like Robert Dick Wilson and Metchin Gratian and Van Til broke off from Princeton when it started to go liberal because these are the fundamental things that we won't surrender. And we should all have those things in our lives.

And we're fundamental in that sense. And I do not like being placed in the same category as a Muslim fundamentalist who has the right in what he believes to be destructive. We don't have any of that as Christians.

I think it's lowering the bar. Joel Osteen. Hey, wait a minute, Pastor Joe.

Look, no, no, no, no. You know, and no doubt if we ate with him, say this is a brother, you know, but you know, it's the Copeland Hagen ilk. It isn't really anything new.

Osteen uses a problematic Bible version, the message, talking about the men who received their sight, the blind men who came to Jesus. Jesus said to them, are you believing to go higher in life, to rise above your obstacles, to live in health and abundance and victory? You will become what you believe. But that's what he said to the blind men.

He said, as your faith is so beautiful, they got, they received their sight because they believed in Jesus, not because they had a positive mental attitude. He says the reason that he says the reason the Hebrews didn't enter the promised land was because of their lack of faith and their lack of self esteem. Robbed them of a fruitful future.

They never fulfilled their destiny because of the way they saw themselves. Please don't laugh. Because this is a brother.

You know, I come home sometimes Sunday night, I'm really shots and I sit there and surf and I don't know why I do that to myself and kind of go. And I watched him the other week and he was saying, you know, those of you who have suffered in New Orleans, we have faith for you. And the whole church is going, yeah, that's a good thing.

And he says, those of you who have lost your homes, we have faith for you. We believe God's going to give you a brand new home, a bigger home, a more expensive home. Everybody's going crazy.

Then he starts on cars. Those of you who have lost your cars, God's going to give you a faster car, a more expensive car. Everybody's going.

And I'm listening to this for 40 minutes and I thought, what in the world are you talking about? And what bothers me immensely is not what's said, it's what's not said. Where's the cross, the resurrection, the blood of Jesus Christ, the rescue of the culture? It's not there. McLaren, one of the voices for the emergent church, Brian McLaren says this, the church has been preoccupied with the question, what happens to

your soul after you die? As if the reason for Jesus coming can be summed up in, Jesus is trying to help more souls get into heaven as opposed to hell.

Summary, I just think a fair reading of the gospels blows that out of the water. I don't think the entire message of the life of Jesus, I can understand some of this, is about that. It's from a PBS special in the emergent church.

Jesus says, for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believed in him would not perish but have everlasting life. The son didn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. That kind of sums up the thing too.

I don't think we've got the gospel right yet. What does it mean to be saved? When I read the Bible, I don't see it meaning I'm going to heaven when I die. I'm glad I see that when I read the Bible.

I am going to heaven when I die. And nobody's clapping. You clapped when Don said he was going to heaven.

I don't know whether you're looking forward to seeing him and not looking forward to seeing me. None of us want to throw the Bible out the window. What we want to do is become more savvy, more aware in our interpretive grids.

One good way to think of the Bible for me is to think of it as a scrapbook of memorabilia. I don't think of it that way. It's not good for me to think that way.

McLaren. After Brian McLaren of The Emergent, brand new neo-evangelism, was named as one of the top 25 most influential evangelicals in America today by Time Magazine February 7, 2005. In that interview, in the midst of the purpose, different craze, and so forth, Brian McLaren has endorsed a book by Alan Jones.

He has endorsed the book that calls the cross a vile doctrine. It's reimagining Christianity by Jones. And the Spiritual Teachers Project, of which Jones is involved, is a group of about 25 that includes Zen, Buddhists, monks, New Agers.

I mean, just, I read this and I'm amazed at some of this. Rob Bell. And, you know, people are getting saved.

Great guy. You sit there, and I'm sure you feel that way. But as I look at this, here's his bell.

It says, the bells began questioning their assumptions about the Bible itself, discovering the Bible as a human product, as Rob puts it, rather than a product of divine fiat. What he's discovered now is the Bible is a human product, not the product of God. It's still the center, but it's a different kind of center.

His wife says, Kristen, I grew up thinking that we'd figure out the Bible, that we knew what it means. Now I have no idea what most of it means, and yet I feel life is big again. Life used to be in black and white, now it's in color.

Erwin McManus says this, stop preaching sermons, start telling stories. Look, all of this to say there's an erosion out there, and the Word of God is under attack, and the temptation for you can be to see television churches, to try to understand that behind the scenes, there's 1,300 Calvaries in the country now. And I'm not touting Calvary.

There's a lot of great work going on outside of Calvary, but I'm just saying you're part of a movement where there's 1,300 churches in the country. KP has 21,000 churches in the 1040 window consider themselves part of Calvary. There's over a million house churches in the underground church in China consider themselves part of Calvary.

You're part of something that's spreading around the world, that's touching lives everywhere. And somehow, because we sit in front of the tube, we see this, you know, this thing built, erected, this huge, you know, with everything that makes people happy on the vertical, and we think we're not successful unless we're doing that. Remember, Paul stood in the arena in Ephesus with 20,000 people screaming at him, great as Diana of the Ephesians, and he was there in Ephesus with what, 30, 40, 50 people? But which side of that would you want to stand on? He had the truth.

He had light. He had Jesus Christ. Robert Dick Wilson, just an exhortation as I end, talking about the validity of the Old Testament manuscripts.

This is from an address he made called, What is an Expert? It was printed in the Bible League quarterly in 1955. Robert Dick Wilson was a scholar at the turn of the last century, taught at Princeton, the head of Semitic languages. He could read and write read and write 45 ancient Semitic languages.

When he was 25 years old, he could read the New Testament in nine different languages, and had the New Testament memorized in Hebrew, and could quote the New Testament from Matthew chapter 1 to Revelation in Hebrew, every syllable without missing a syllable, and had many of the Old Testament books memorized in Hebrew. He says this, For 45 years, continuously, I have devoted myself to one great study of the Old Testament, in all of its languages, in all of its archaeology, in all of its translations. The critics of the Bible, who go to it in order to find fault, claim themselves all knowledge, all virtue, all love of the truth.

One of their favorite phrases is, All scholars agree. Well, when a man says that, I wish to know who the scholars are and what they agree on. Where do they get their evidence? I defy any man to make an attack on the Old Testament on the ground of evidence that I cannot investigate.

After I learned the necessary languages, I set about the investigation of every single consonant in the Hebrew Old Testament. There are about 1,250,000 of them. It took me many years to achieve my task.

I had to observe variations in the text, in the manuscripts, notes of the Masorites, in order of various versions, parallel passages, and conjectural emendations of critics. And then I had to classify the results of every character, every consonant, to reduce the Old Testament criticism to an absolutely objective science, something which is based on evidence and not opinion. The result of those 45 years of study which I have given to the text has been this.

I can affirm that there is not a page of the Old Testament concerning which you need have any doubt. For example, to illustrate its accuracy, there are 29 ancient kings whose names are mentioned not only in the Bible, but also on monuments we've uncovered of their own time. There are also 195 consonants in those 29 proper names.

Yet we find that in the documents of the Hebrew Old Testament, there are only two consonants out of the 195 that have ever been called into question, and they are all exactly the same way as they are inscribed on their monuments, which archaeologists have dated and discovered. Some of these go back 4,000

years. He says the names in the Old Testament are exactly spelt the way that they have been turned up on the monuments, and some of them got 4,000 years, and are written that every letter is clear and correct.

Compare this accuracy with the greatest scholar of his age, the librarian at Alexandria, Egypt, 200 BC. He compiled a catalog of the kings of Egypt, 38 in all. Of the entire number, only three or four are recognizable.

He also made a list of the kings of Assyria, and in only one case can we tell who he's talking about, and that one's not spelled correctly. Or take Ptolemy, who drew up a register of 18 kings of Babylon. Not one of them is properly spelled.

You could not make them out at all if you didn't know some of the outside sources. If anyone talks about the Bible, ask him about the kings mentioned in it. There are 29 kings referred to, 10 different countries among these 29, all of which are included in the Bible and on the monuments.

Every one of these is given their right name in the Bible, their right country, their right place in correct chronological order. Think what this means, is his conclusion. Think what this means.

What do we hold in our hand? And what do we need to do to better it? You know, we get caught in this trap sometimes. Jesus says this in Revelation chapter 3, and I'll read it to you there. And I believe it's speaking to the last day's church.

To the angel of the church of Philadelphia, and that's not why I'm partial to this. Write these things, saith he that is holy and true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee an open door.

So this is an effective church. No man can shut it, for thou hast little strength. And that's not a criticism.

There's no criticism. He's actually saying that's good. You actually have a little strength.

And has kept my word. I've set an open door before you that no man can shut for, that's causative in the Greek, because, the reason I've set the open door in front of you is because of this. You actually have a little strength, and you have kept my word.

There's a regard to it. You have kept my word. You have not denied my name.

And you still know the difference between who's a Jew and who's not? A lot of people don't know that anymore. And because you have kept the word of my patience, my hupomoni, what I've borne up under, because you have kept my passion, because you've kept my suffering, because you've kept the cross and the blood of Christ, because you've kept my word, I'm also going to keep you from the hour that's coming to try all of those who dwell on the earth. Hold that fast, which thou hast.

Let no man take your crown. And of course, he ends by saying this. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Eugene Peterson in The Message says, listen to the wind words blowing through the churches. Listen to the wind words. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The holiness and sovereignty of God is under attack. There's an agenda behind it. Some well-meaning, some convoluted, some very dark.

Because the person of God, his holiness, his sovereignty is under attack, of course, the natural next step is the word of that holy God then comes under attack. And when the word of that holy God comes under attack, the central message of it, which is the cross and the blood of Christ, the resurrection, that then comes under attack. My exhortation to you is, what do you have in your hand? And think what that means.

Inspired, preserved, every word important, every letter important. Integrity of the text handed to us. Read your paraphrases.

Read those things. Study to show yourself approved. But have a translation.

Have a translation of the words of God. And never make apology or be ashamed because heaven and earth is going to pass away not one yod, not one tittle is going to pass from this. Let's stand.

Let's pray. Lord, let that be to you, Lord. You have given us your word.

And Lord, in one great sense when we sit alone with it, it flays us, Lord. It's sharp and it's powerful. It divides down into our being between that which is soulish and that which is spiritual, Lord.

How we love your word. And Lord, I pray as pastors, Lord, as those serving, Lord, that our time alone, Lord, my time alone with your word, which is the one thing I love to do so much, Lord, would not be eaten up by all of the other responsibilities that we have, Lord. We think of those with wisdom, filled with the Spirit, with tact, that we're given the weight on tables so that, Lord, so that others might give themselves to the word of God and to prayer, Lord.

Let that be our call in these days. And Lord, we believe if we're going to see an awakening, if the Calvary movement's going to be born again, Lord, if we're going to see revival in our hearts and in our churches and in this nation, Lord, we believe it will be where your word is being honored as your word. Lord, never let us be pharisaical.

Please, Father, don't let that be the spirit of these things. Make us wise. Let us be sons who love to sit in your presence and open your word and love it.

Have the full force of all that it is and its beauty and its power in our lives. Incline our hearts, Lord. Cause us to walk in your statutes.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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