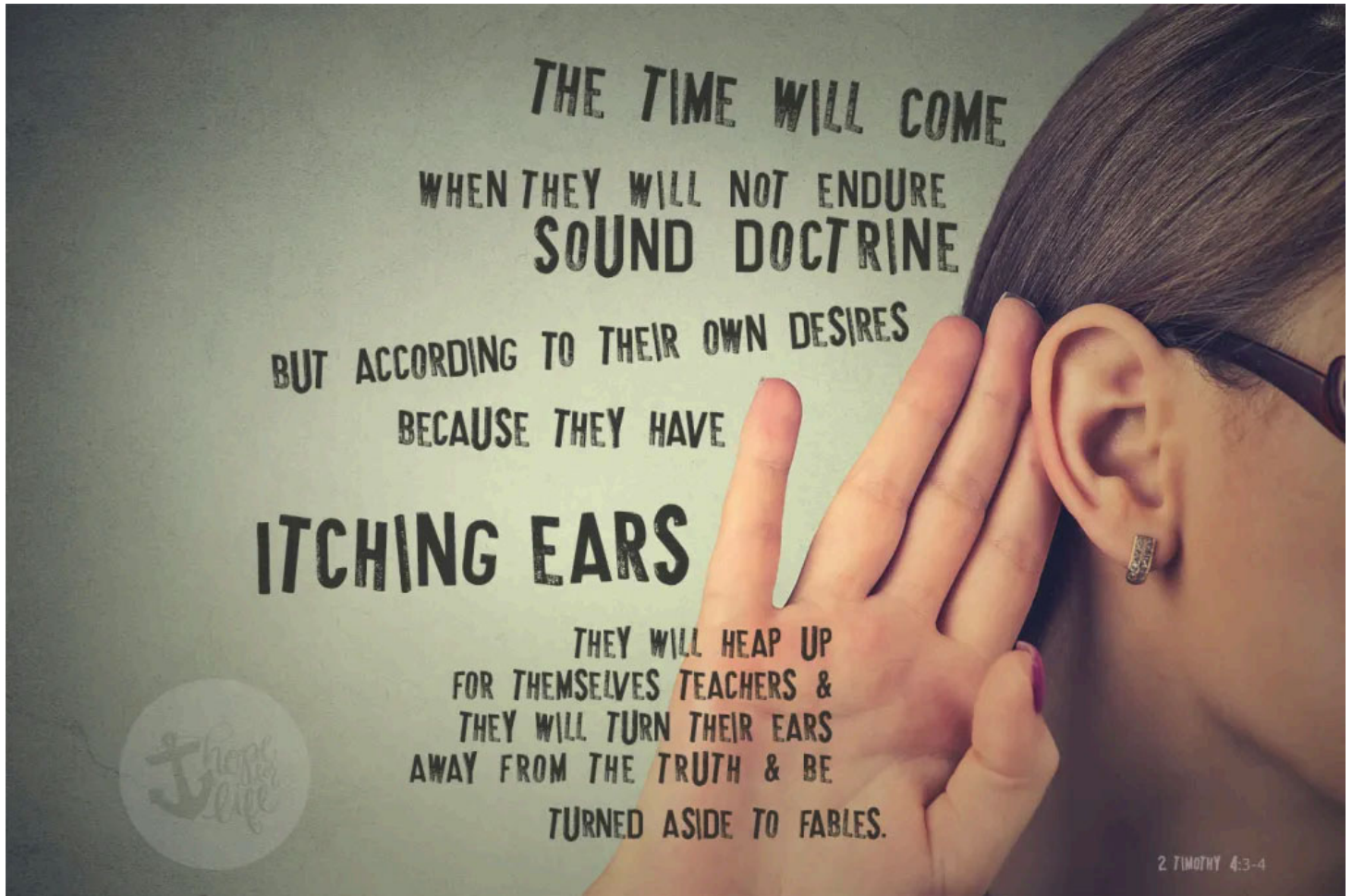


7 Lethal Legacies of Post-Modernism in the Church



For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. -2 Timothy 4:3-4

An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it this way! But what will you do when the end comes? -Jeremiah 5:30-31

The Emerging Church (Postmodernism)

I meet people along the way who model for me, each in a different way, what a new kind of Christian might look like. They differ in many ways, but they generally agree that the old show is over, the modern jig is up, and it's time for

something radically new ... You begin to wonder if maybe you're at the front edge of something — if your tentative and anxious steps “off the map” are actually the beginning of a new adventure into terra nova, new ground, fresh territory. *-Brian D. McLaren*

Old Lights include the resurgent fundamentalists in every religion who put a freeze on history and fortify their adherents against the “new dark age” in which they are forced to live. “Back to the Bible,” Old Lights shout ... But not everything Old Lights say is wrong. Much is right. Even a stopped clock is right twice a day, the old adage reminds us. *-Leonard Sweet*

For me, the beginning of sharing my faith with people began by throwing out Christianity and embracing Christian spirituality, a nonpolitical mysterious system that can be experienced but not explained. *-Donald Miller*

The Bible is not considered an accurate, absolute, authoritative, or authoritarian source but a book to be experienced and one experience can be as valid as any other can. Experience, dialogue, feelings, and conversations are equated with Scripture while certitude, authority, and doctrine are to be eschewed! No doctrines are to be absolute and truth or doctrine must be considered only with personal experiences, traditions, historical leaders, etc. The Bible is not an answer book. *-Brian D. McLaren*

In the 1990's, and early 2000's, an “innovative” idea for a new-and-improved type of postmodern Christianity was funded and created by the Leadership Network (LN was started by businessman Bob Buford, who was strongly connected to Peter Drucker; and both were fans of pragmatism and mysticism). Whatever the original intent, the Emerging Church emerged mainly in opposition to, and with the goal of subverting biblical Christianity, while merging with all other non-Christian beliefs. *[Note: For this very reason, right at the beginning of the EC, my wife called it the “Merging Church.”]*

- **The Emerging Church:** A postmodern-centric spirituality that mirrors Genesis 3:1-6 and seeks to subvert biblical Christianity and replace it with a counterfeit Christianity

What Is Postmodernism?

Some believe that postmodernism is a profound, enlightened, and sophisticated philosophy, and that it is necessary to understand and apply it to all areas of life, including Christianity (cp. Col 2:4, 8; 1 Tim 6:20-21). The reality, however, is that God calls it foolishness (e.g., 1 Cor 1:17ff). More specifically, postmodernism is just the latest version of man's wisdom that rebels against God and seeks to pervert and subvert God's Word (Gen 3:1ff).

Postmodernism, which started in the mid-20th century, and is the trending form of humanism today, believes mankind is sovereign and subjectivity is supreme. In fact, functional postmodernism can be summed up in three things: Feelings are supreme; “Has God indeed said ...” (Gen 3:1; casting doubt on, criticizing, diminishing, and perverting God’s Word of truth); and the deconstruction/destruction of objectivity and objective truth. We can see why they loathe objectivity.

- **Objectivity:** the concept of truth independent from individual subjectivity (biases which are caused by a person’s feelings, desires, selfishness, mood, perception, emotions, or imagination)

The main reason Postmodernists give subjectivity infinitely more power than objectivity is that it makes them a de facto “god” (cp. Gen 3:1ff), especially when it comes to the authority to determine truth. This is why we see more and more people give themselves power to trump truth and overturn reality (and espouse an inverted reality), all based on their feelings and the feelings and desires of certain people (e.g., the culture; those who reject objective truth and God’s written Word, and often hate God and His people).

Humanists and Postmodernists generally believe humans are naturally wonderful, if not divine. Yet many Postmodernists see one group of people as bad, and perhaps evil, as well as a danger to the rest of society and to the collective good: those who disagree with Postmodernists (e.g., those who believe in and rely on truth, absolute truth, objectivity and objective truth, God’s written Word of truth, etc.).

Therefore, many adherents to postmodernism believe it is noble and necessary to suppress, cancel, and destroy those who do not yield to their beliefs. Why? In addition to the lie of being like God (Gen 3; 2 Thess 2:9-12), they rationalize this with the classic lie: “it’s all for the greater good.” We see this actively applied each and every day.

Since the moment Adam and Eve rebelled against God and His Word, humanity has not stopped inventing ways to rebel against God and His Word (Rom 1:30; cp. 2 Cor 2:11; Gen 6:5; Rom 3:11-18). Therefore, postmodernism is nothing more than an old fashioned rebellion against God cloaked in a sophisticated sounding name. This defiance and self-appointed authority is not new in the least.

An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it this way! But what will you do when the end comes? *-Jeremiah 5:30-31*

Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.” And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” - *Jeremiah 18:11-12*

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. -*Judges 21:25*

- **Postmodernism:** Confusion wrapped up in uncertainty and doubt, wrapped up in the supremacy of feelings, wrapped up in deconstructionism (e.g., destroying objective truth), wrapped up in rebellion against God and His Word.

Here is one more way to understand the postmodern functional mindset: We get to pick and choose what is true, and this is based on our feelings and desires—which is loosely tied to the collective wants and whims of those who agree with us. And we get to reject the people, ideas, realities, and truths that do not fit with what we want to be true—and, if necessary, we must destroy them because they are holding up the collective good.

Postmodernism & Pragmatism

Somewhat ironically, EC leaders leveraged the errors of the Church-Growth Movement (e.g., pragmatism)—and the superficial Christianity it produced—against biblical Christianity. Adding irony upon irony, and error upon error, they, too, embraced pragmatism, while also undermining God’s Word. Overall, they concluded that the old way of doing church didn’t work (e.g., teaching the Bible), so a new way was needed, and a new church was born.

In fact, as the Bells describe it, after launching Mars Hill in 1999, they found themselves increasingly uncomfortable with church. “Life in the church had become so small,” Kristen says. “It had worked for me for a long time. Then it stopped working.” -*Kristen Bell, wife of Rob Bell*

Emergents would be loathe to admit it, but the EC was actually very similar to the Church Growth Movement, with one main exception: while both embraced various aspects of the world’s ways and wisdom, the EC added the next trending wisdom of the age, postmodernism. What is more, many CGM churches found a lot in common with the EC, and conformed to one degree or another to the ways of the EC.

Making all of this even worse, the EC manufactured the latest spirit of the age into a pragmatic do-or-die need: “We must cut out what does not work (e.g., teaching the Word of God) and adopt only what does work, embracing postmodernism, and whatever Postmoderns want.” Unsurprisingly, this turned into another bizarre rationalization and need to diminish biblical Christianity and to replace it with the in vogue “wisdom” of that day.

As a result, in their minds and teachings, this became an irrational, superlative life-or-death need that all of Christianity depended on: embrace the ways and wisdom of

postmodernism, “or die.” In other words, if Christians do not do what Emergents say must happen, if they do not bend their knee to postmodernism, all of Christianity will become “extinct.” And many fell for it.

The wonder is that churches are not in more disarray ... They are standing pat, opting to uphold the status quo rather than undergo the upheaval ... Postmodern culture is a change-or-be-changed world. The word is out: Reinvent yourself for the 21st century or die. *-Leonard Sweet*

The church must acclimate to a changing world, or she will destine herself to irrelevance or even extinction ... One of those dramatic changes in our environment is the shift from words to images. To do church in a way that is entirely text driven is the kiss of death. *-Erwin McManus*

The church must provide postmoderns with an alternity of rituals by which they can turn and tune to one another and feel connected to the cosmos. *-Leonard Sweet*

Overall, the EC (or “Emergent Church”) tried to present itself as a kinder, cooler, and more compassionate version of Christianity that would appeal more to the world, particularly to the postmodern generation. In reality, however, it was a New-Age-like, pseudo-Christian inter-spiritual movement that was wholly subjective, politically left, anti-conservative, always shifting with the wants and whims of “the culture” (Eph 4:14), and centered on feelings, experiences, emotions, mysticism, man’s wisdom, and the social gospel—all while teaching that everyone goes to heaven (e.g., Universalism; no hell; and no need to share the gospel).

In short, the EC declared just about everything to be good (the world’s wisdom; mysticism; all religions), with one exception: the values and beliefs of biblical Christians (i.e., those with a high view of Scripture, truth, discernment, the gospel, objectivity, absolute truth, freedom, etc.). Therefore, the EC was not only the polar opposite of biblical Christianity, it was the perfect forerunner of our final two stages of deception, division, and destruction (i.e., world-approved Christianity and the “Woke Church”).

In keeping with the overall theme of attacking God’s Word, perhaps nothing set the EC apart more from biblical Christianity than the teaching that the Bible is not a divine product, but was man-made (cp. Gen 3:1; 2 Tim 3:15-4:5; Ps 18:30). In the same vein, some EC friendly folks also scoffed at, shamed, and slandered biblical Christians as “Bibliolaters” (due to their high esteem and reverence of God’s written Word).

In other words, because of their own low view, or adversarial view of Scripture, they falsely accused biblical Christians of “idolizing” and “worshipping” the Bible (see Ps 56:2-5; 138:2; Is 66:2; cp. Ex 23:1). This slander is not new. It is so old that years ago, in the mid-19th

century, the Prince of Preachers roundly rebuked this opposition to Jesus—and the belittling of Him and His Word—and sin against biblical Christians ...

Let me call your attention to the fact that when Jesus had risen from the dead, He was just as tender of Scripture as He was before His decease. He told them that “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and this it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead” (Luke 24:44-46, KJV).

Find Jesus where you may, He is the antagonist of those who would lessen the authority of Holy Scripture. “It is written” is His weapon against Satan, His argument against wicked men. The learned of this hour scoff at the Book and accuse of Bibliolatry those of us who reverence the Divine Word; but in this they derive no assistance from the teaching or example of Jesus.

Not a word derogatory of Scripture ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ; but evermore He manifested the most reverent regard for every jot and tittle of the inspired Volume. Since our Savior, not only before His death, but after it, took care to commend the Scriptures to us, let us avoid with all our hearts all teaching in which Holy Scripture is put into the background. -C. H. Spurgeon [*emphasis added*]

Nevertheless, despite these logical and biblical truths, the postmodern Emerging Church could rightly be described as doing everything Spurgeon condemned, in addition to doing the opposite of what he commended. What is more, because Jesus is the Word (Jn 1:1; 1 Jn 1:1; Rev 19:13), all their attacks on God’s Word were attacks on God’s Son, on God Himself, as well as on God’s people (cp. Acts 9:6).

The good news is that many biblical Christians rose to the challenge and squelched many of these assaults. For the most part, they, too, used Jesus’ “weapon” of “It is written” (Lk 4:4). As a result, there was a victory, of sorts. In many ways, however, the die was cast and the damage was done. So, while the EC seemed to fade away (e.g., their main website ceased to exist; we didn’t hear the word “Emergent” much), it would come back to life with even more power and destruction (see the next two chapters).

Perhaps the main reason this victory was short lived was that much of the Church still did not repent of its sin of embracing and espousing the world’s wisdom and ways. They still failed to turn to Scripture, as God exhorts His people to do over and over in His Word. Also, many believers and Church leaders—those who were somewhat biblical—still failed to wake up and see the dangers all around and inside the Church. At the least, they didn’t

do much about it. Therefore, these people, wittingly or not, enabled this heinous sin and error to thrive inside the Church.

When it comes to the Emerging Church, yes, their ideas were exposed and defeated biblically. Yes, they were not happy about this defeat. However, the fact that their teachings clashed with, and could not be supported by Scripture, did not bother them at all. Why? Because, as they would likely admit, their ideas, authority, hope, and beliefs didn't really come from or depend on God's written Word (cp. Jer 8:8-9; 1 Tim 6:20-21; 2 Tim 3:15-4:5). If it did, they would have repented.

To them the Bible was, at best, just one of many (man-made) sources. And they got to pick and choose what felt best to them, and what they could alter or reject, all depending on what was going on in the world at the time (cp. 1 Jn 4:5-6; Jer 5:30-31; Eph 4:14). Therefore, a final examination of their fruit reveals they clearly followed the spirit of the world, while rebelling against the Spirit of truth (e.g., 1 Cor 1:17-2:16; Matt 7:13-19).

As we know, we can all be in error, and we all sin. However, instead of acknowledging this, they chose to retreat rather than repent. Turning to Scripture likely never entered their minds. Sadly, they followed the established pattern we have seen over and over by doubling-down and embracing more of the world's wisdom and ways, especially mysticism, moving even more to the left and away from God's Word.

7 Lethal Legacies of Post-Modernism in the Church

Here are the seven main lasting lethal legacies of the Emerging Church:

1. **DECONSTRUCTED OBJECTIVE TRUTH** (God's written Word; reason, logic, objectivity) and replaced it with subjectivism (feelings; emotions; mysticism; man's wisdom; "lived experiences").
2. **UNDERMINED GOD'S AUTHORITY** (Gen 3:1ff) and exalted man's authority (cp. Jer 5:30-31; Col 2:8; 1 Jn 4:5-6), which is also based on feelings, the world's wisdom, mysticism, the culture (e.g., "Sola Cultura"), the spirit of the age, "the spirit of error," etc.
3. **BLURRED THE LINES** between binary reality, as well as between what is true, right, and good and what is false, wrong, and harmful (Ezek 22:26; Ps 1:1-3; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1).
4. **SHIFTED FOCUS AWAY FROM ETERNAL JUSTICE** and sin (e.g., Jn 1:29; 3:36; Gal 6:7-8; Rev 20:11-15) and on to temporal justice, at best, but mostly to counterfeit justice (e.g., social justice; the social gospel).
5. **DEMONIZED BIBLICAL CHRISTIANS** through false narratives and false accusations (e.g., biblical Christians: hold up progress, keep people from knowing God and love,

are judgmental haters, worship America and the Bible, etc.), which created more progressive, anti-conservative, leftist Christ-followers.

6. **ACCELERATED AN INVERTED REALITY** (Is 5:20; Rom 1:25).

7. **PAVED THE WAY FOR WORLDWIDE DECEPTION** by promoting a world-embracing pseudo-Christian spirituality that is inclusive of just about everything, except the Bible, biblical Christianity, and Judeo-Christian values.

As you would expect, each of these seven things have increasingly dumbed down much of the Church, hindered people from knowing the true Jesus by being saved through the true gospel, and allowed more and more mysticism, leftism, and the world's wisdom to be exalted and embraced by believers and unbelievers alike. Now that the dam has been fully breached, there is no limit to the amount or variety of the world's wisdom flooding into the Church, along with ever-increasing opposition to Scripture and biblical Christianity.

*Above excerpt taken from Hope For Life's eBook **Seven Deadly Errors Destroying (and Refining) The Church** (*The History of How the Church Went From the Word, to the World, to the Woke Church ... And What We Can Do About It*)

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