PREACHING & THE EMERGING CHURCH

An Examination of Four Founding Leaders:
Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt.

John S. Bohannon

"An absolutely superb treatment. Dr. Bohannon's critique and evaluation is thorough, even exhaustive! It is also judicious and compelling. This book is a must-read for those who care about the importance of theological conviction and its impact on the contemporary ministry of the Word. Not all who read this work will agree with his conclusions (I do!), but all will be forced to carefully consider what he says."

Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

"If you're passionate about preaching and want to discern what preaching should look like in emerging contexts, you'll want to read this book. Bohannon provides the reader an exhaustive and insightful look into the preaching ministry of four of the emerging church movement's most colorful and sometimes controversial leaders. There are things to affirm and others to reject, and now, thanks to Bohannon, we have a helpful tool to help us discern the difference between the two."

Ed Stetzer, President, LifeWay Research

"Much has been written about the emerging church, but little thought has been given to the preaching of this movement. John Bohannon offers us a thorough taxonomy of the homiletics of the emerging church, showing how the movement's leaders measure up as expositors. In so doing, he offers each of us the opportunity to take the pulse of our own preaching. If the health of the church depends upon the quality of its preaching, we will want to pay attention to this critique."

Kenton C. Anderson, Professor of Homiletics, ACTS Seminaries of Trinity Western University; author, *Choosing to Preach*

"John Bohannon's thorough study of McLaren, Pagitt, Kimball, and Driscoll supplies an accurate typology of the emerging church and demonstrates the inevitable connection between doctrine and ministry. What we believe does influence how we preach!"

Michael Wittmer, Professor of Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary; author, *Don't Stop Believing*

"When it comes to preaching, the Emerging Church is a mixed bag. Bohannon's interaction with McLaren, Pagitt, Kimball, and Driscoll as examples of the broad spectrum of Emerging Church preaching is probably the best I have seen. He has mined the resources, especially the online resources, and made them available to all for their own smelting purposes. All preachers who read this work will benefit. I highly recommend it."

David L. Allen, Dean of the School of Theology, Professor of Preaching, Director of the Center for Biblical Preaching, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

"If you want to keep up with the trends in preaching today, John Bohannon's work is a must-read. His research into contemporary homiletics is penetrating, and his analysis will help anyone gain a deeper understanding of today's church. I am indebted for a book like this that brings preaching into sharper focus. "

Greg W. Heisler, Associate Professor of Preaching, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

"Take time prior to reading this work to consider as many questions as possible related to preaching and the Emerging Church. I am certain that all your questions will find exhaustive answers in John Bohannon's work. Combining impeccable scholarship and pastoral experience, Dr. Bohannon offers a work that serves as an educator to the professor and a reference guide to the pastor seeking to grasp the diversities and commonalities within the Emerging Church Movement."

James L. Smyrl, Executive Pastor of Education, First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida; Adjunct Instructor of Preaching, Liberty University

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	*Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible*, Updated Edition
NKJV	*Holy Bible: New King James Version*
NIV	*Holy Bible: New International Version*
JBTM	*Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry Journal*
SEBTS	Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
TMSJ	*The Master's Seminary Journal*
YLN	Young Leaders Network

To my beautiful wife Jody,
a woman who passionately loves Jesus,
affectionately loves our kids, and by God's grace,
loves and stands by her husband—for which I am
gratefully blessed!

&

To Dr. Glen D. Bohannon, my father, spiritual mentor,
and friend, I am forever grateful for your love,
support, encouragement, prayers, and,
most of all, for introducing me to Jesus.

Perusing the bookshelves of a seminary bookstore back in 2005 I noticed a work titled *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. As best I can recall, this was my first exposure to the term emerging church. I thought to myself then, "Emerging church, what is that?" Little did I know that over the next few years I would invest an enormous part of my life in answering that question—specifically as it relates to preaching the gospel.

Shortly after this first encounter came my second. I was given the task, as part of a doctoral preaching seminar on the contemporary church, to define both the movement itself and its views on preaching. It was then that I was formerly introduced to the works of the movement's founding leaders such as Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll. The movement itself intrigued me. Young pastors were asking and wrestling with some of the same questions I had about the church, its mission, and its proclamation of the gospel. Yet some of its solutions, or should I say conversations, left me confused, challenged, and at times charged.

Therefore, in 2007 I embarked upon my third encounter with the emerging church by making it the focus of my doctoral dissertation in the field of applied theology and expositional preaching. For over two years I spent countless hours reading thousands of pages of emerging church literature, blogs, and websites, attending emerging church conferences, and listening to sermons, lectures, and conversations from four of the most colorful and sometimes controversial emerging church leaders. During this time the emerging church book market exploded and a number of critiques of the movement began to emerge as well. Despite wanting to engage the emerging church about its theological direction—early in the process—I patiently waited and refrained from concluding my work too soon. Instead, I extended the time-line of my doctoral research in order to provide published data from both the key voices within the movement as well as reputable voices of those outside of the conversation, and/or those who were in disagreement with some of the movement's orthodoxy and praxis.

Thus, presented in this book is what I hope you will find to be a well-researched assessment and biblical critique of the

preaching within the emerging church. You may not agree with my conclusions, but I trust you will find the research helpful in making your own decision about what preaching wisdom or warnings have emerged from the movement. To serve this purpose, and to make its contemporary content available as timely as possible, I have chosen to release this work in its original dissertation format.

A final word must now be shared concerning the four chosen preachers, and to those who supported me in this project. First, I want to thank Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt. I have learned much from your ministries for which I am grateful. In some cases, I have also disagreed much. If my critique has honored the Lord and his Word, then I pray you will find this work helpful. If in any way it has not, then I pray the Lord and you will provide me correction so that I can confess my mistakes, learn from them, and grow in my understanding of how to better preach the gospel and glory of Jesus Christ in all of Scripture.

Second, I want to thank Danny Akin, Greg Heisler, and David Allen who provided me constructive counsel in the editing of this work as part of my doctorate degree at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Third, a special thanks is due my fellow elders of Water's Edge Community Church who allowed me the freedom to pursue my doctorate and thus this contemporary church project. Finally, I want to acknowledge my appreciation to Mike Anderson, Jordan Buckley and the rest of the Resurgence team for making this project available to the church at large. I pray this book will bless preachers of the Word, edify the church, and most importantly help in spreading the fame of Jesus through faithful proclamation of His person and work—the gospel.

John S. Bohannon
Preaching Pastor
Water's Edge Community Church
Lake Country, Virginia

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Growth, Expansion, and Future of the Emerging Church

A recent Google search engine investigation on the emerging church identified in excess of 2.5 million references.[1] Scanning promotional catalogs of religious book distributors or inquiring online about emerging church books reveal a plethora of recent, new, and forthcoming releases engaging the emerging conversation.[2] In 2003 over 1,000 pastors attended the Emergent Church Convention, held in San Diego, while in comparison the traditional National Pastors Convention, held simultaneously, ushered in a fraction below 2,000.[3] Mainstream evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* identifies the emerging church as a

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[1] The google search (emerging church) was conducted on September 12, 2007. This same search conducted on October 20, 2005 reported just a fraction over half a million. See John Bohannon, "Preaching and the Emerging Church," *Faith & Mission* 23/2 (2006): 55. Cf. Michael Moynagh, *Emergingchurch.intro* (Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2004), 16.

[2] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 13. A search (9/15/2005) for emerging church books at Amazon revealed twenty-five works, three of which were focused critiques of the emerging church movement. See Bohannon, "Preaching and the Emerging Church," 70. Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Master's Seminary Library, noted in the fall of 2006 that there were an additional "two dozen new works on the subject scheduled for publication." Additionally he stated that there are over "18 million web pages with some material on the movement." See Dennis M. Swanson, "Bibliography of Works on the Emerging Church," *TMSJ* 17/2 (Fall 2006): 223. Mark Driscoll has recently teamed up with Crossway books in an agreement to publish a line of books called Re:Lit (Resurgence Literature). Six new books are in the making as a part of this new series. See Mark Driscoll, "Re:Lit," *TheResurgence Web Site*, n.p. [cited 15 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://www.theresurgence.com/md_blog_2007_09_10_re_lit. Baker books have teamed up with emergent village to publish a line of books that encourage pastors who are seeking "to live into God's kingdom here and now." Five books have been released thus far in 2007 by this consortium. See Baker Books, "Emersion Books," *Baker Books Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.emersionbooks.com.

[3] D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 12. Cf. Phil Johnson, "Joyriding on the Downgrade at Breakneck Speed: The Dark Side of Diversity," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 211–12.

Christian phenomenon that is engaging the culture in ways not seen since the Jesus Movement of the 1970's.[4]

Evidence of attraction to the movement has appeared in major and national publications outside the arena of evangelicalism. Emerging church news stories have run on the front page of the *New York Times*, in the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*—not to mention religious specials on major television and cable networks, and radio programs.[5]

Additionally, the emerging church mystique has captured the attention of theological academies and societies. The Evangelical Theological Society serves as one prime example having composed academic meetings, in their entirety, on the subject. [6] Prominent seminary professors have arranged their writing schedule to include time for books, articles, and blogs devoted to the topic.[7] Evangelical seminaries are offering emerging church courses, having created masters and doctorate programs aimed at developing twenty-first century leaders for the emerging church.[8]

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[4] See Andy Crouch, "The Emerging Mystique," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 13 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/011/12.36.html.

[5] Doug Pagitt, "Unraveling Emergent," *Relevant*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2007]. Online: www.relevantmagazine.com/god_article.php?id=6365&print=true. See e.g. Lawton Kim, "Religion and Ethics," *Newsweekly*, *PBS* Television, no.846, n.p. [cited 20 Aug. 2006]. Online: http://www.pbs .org/wnet/religionandethics/week846/interview.html; John Leland, "Hip New Churches Sway to a Different Drummer," *The New York Times*, n.p. [cited 10 Mar. 2006]. Online: http://query.nytimes .com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E00e4dc123df93ba25751c0a9629c8; Molly Worthen, "Who Would Jesus Smack Down," *The New York Times*, n.p. [cited 12 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.nytimes. .com/2009/01/11/magazine/11punk-t.html.

[6] The 2007 Eastern Region Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society composed their entire meeting around the emerging church—"Postmodernism, the Emerging Church and Evangelicalism." This author presented a parallel session paper on the subject of preaching and the emerging church. See John Bohannon, "Preaching and the Emerging Church" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society Eastern Regional Meeting, Hatfield, Penn., March 23, 2007).

[7] D. A Carson presented one of the first published critiques of the movement. See Carson, B*ecoming Conversant*. Other professors who have either written for or provided evaluation of the movement include Ryan Bolger, Gerry Breshears, John Franke, Eddie Gibbs, Stanley Grenz, John Hammett, John MacArthur, Scott McKnight, R.Scott Smith, Ed Stetzer, Robert Webber, David Wells, and Michael Wittmer. The works of these professors will be referenced throughout this work. See www.jesuscreed.org to observe a popular blog site written by Scott McKnight, New Testament Professor at North Park University, that embraces the emerging church. McKnight's blog has been rated # 1 for the emerging church by *Technorati.com*.

[8] Tony Jones writes, "Emergent texts have taken up residence on syllabi across the theological spectrum" in a number of seminaries and divinity schools, identifying this trend as "one harbinger of the pervasiveness of all things emergent in the church . . . ." See Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 56. Bethel Seminary offers a Doctor of Ministry degree led by Leith Anderson aimed at "developing leaders of excellence who are uniquely equipped to serve as senior leaders in larger *emerging churches*" (emphasis mine). See Bethel Seminary, "*Prospectus, Doctor of Ministry*," *Bethel Seminary Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Feb. 2007]. Online: www.seminary.bethel.edu. Biblical Theological Seminary offers a wide range of courses

The evidence seems conclusive; there exists a persistent and growing trend within evangelicalism known as the emerging church. Will this trendy, chic, and attractive wave of popularity for the emerging church continue to build, become static, or fade into non-existence? The question remains unanswered.

Many participants within the emerging church in addition to evangelicals outside the movement believe it is here to stay. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger's work, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, states that one of their aims is to "dispel the myths that the emerging church is simply a passing fad . . . or a new improved brand or marketing strategy."[9] D. A. Carson, in his critique of the movement, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, just might concur with these sentiments. Carson's preface highlights the "astonishing broad influence" the movement has already created since its emergence nearly a dozen years ago.[10] The birth of an entire class of literature or what John Leland refers to as "a growing stack of hip-looking paperbacks," supported by other publications and conferences among those within the conversation, provides affirmation of its persuasive appeal.[11] Roger Oakland, writing from a similar critical position as Carson, argues in *Faith Undone* that the emerging church movement will in time have an "'impact on all churches' in the Western world and far beyond."[12] In growing definitiveness, the evidence leans toward an increasing viewpoint among those within and outside the emerging church that the *movement* or *conversation* presents an unquestionable voice

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reflecting an emerging church philosophy. The seminary's vision statement reads "to be the ongoing choice for training missional leaders for the emerging church of the 21st century and to be a catalyst for engaging evangelical Christians in dialog with postmodern culture." See Biblical Seminary, "Vision Statement," *Biblical Seminary Web Site*, n.p. [cited 15 Mar. 2007]. Online: www.biblical.edu. Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies offers emerging church classes such as "The Emerging Church in the Twenty-First Century" and "Leading and the Emerging Church." See *Fuller Theological Seminary Web Site*, n.p. [cited 12 Feb. 2007] Online: http://www.fuller.edu/sis/conc/cam.asp.

[9] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in postmodern cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 28. Additionally they are concerned that the movement not be labeled as "representing an avant-guard style of worship, a movement seeking to recoup its losses among young people by developing contemporary worship styles." Robert Webber believes that "the emerging church is being birthed underground. Give it a few years, and it's going to explode." See Robert Webber, quoted in Leland, "Hip New Churches."

[10] Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 9.

[11] Ibid and Leland, "Hip New Churches." Johnson notes that the books of Brian McLaren and other emerging church authors stands out "as one of the remarkable success stories in Christian publishing in the first half of the decade." See Johnson, "Joyriding on the Downgrade," 211.

[12] Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . A New Reformation or an End-Time Deception* (Silverton: Lighthouse Trails, 2007), 20.

within Christianity today—a voice that will remain present in the foreseeable future.[13] Yet for many church leaders, despite this growing influence of the emerging church, the question of what it is has not yet surfaced, or if it has, the answer remains vague, unresolved, or a mystery.[14]

The Role of Preaching Within the Emerging Church

This lack of knowledge about the emerging church creates a similar deficiency in understanding the role of preaching within the movement. Many questions remain unanswered. Does preaching play a significant or minor role within the emerging church? How does theology influence the philosophy and methodology of emerging church preaching? Does emerging church preaching confirm or deny an orthodox view of Scripture? How does emerging church preaching compare with an historical understanding of the protestant homiletical tradition? Does the ecclesiological view of the emerging church influence its preaching position? Moreover, what wisdom or warnings are associated with preaching and the emerging church? These unanswered questions provide the catalyst for the purpose of this work, which seeks to provide a comprehensive, albeit selective, description and analysis of the role of preaching within the emerging church in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses in light of Scripture.

Outline

This work will unfold an analysis and critique of the preaching within the emerging church as follows: part one includes two chapters that provide the historical backdrop for the movement and its leaders. Chapter two provides a basic definition and profile of the emerging church looking at its initial conception as a conversation, its growth into a movement, its splitting into diverse streams, and its current influence upon the contemporary church.

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[13] Many emergent leaders (one stream within the emerging church) would not use the term *movement* to describe the emerging church; they prefer to call it a *conversation*.

[14] Carson references a speaking engagement before several hundred pastors in Australia where none of them had heard of the emerging church. See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 13. Cf. Johnson, "Joyriding on the Downgrade," 211. Johnson writes about the sudden appearance and rapid expansion of the emerging church on the evangelical scene which "completely caught off guard" many evangelical leaders and pastors.

Chapter three introduces four key emerging church leaders by examining their beginnings and current association within the movement, their past and present influence upon it, and the reason or grounds for their inclusion in this work—as representing a significant slice(s) or sample of the preaching within the emerging church.

Part two, which covers chapters four through eight, commences to disclose the specific preaching ministries of these chosen four leaders. Three primary facets of preaching will serve as the assessment criteria for each emerging church leader. First, the message category will examine each preacher's theological position concerning Scripture and the gospel. Second, the mentality assessment looks at their philosophy toward preaching. Lastly, the section on method presents each man's style or form of communicating, which intuitively reveals some aspect of their theology and philosophy.

Part three introduces a critique and assessment of preaching within the emerging church based on Scripture. This critique covers chapters nine and ten having divided the four emerging church preachers into two categories. Homiletical strengths and weaknesses are assessed for each preacher. It is the aim of these chapters to provide pastors a useful tool by which to discern the value of the homiletical counsel emanating from the emerging church. Chapter eleven concludes this research project by offering implications for evangelical (expository) preaching. The significance of these observations is then examined in light of their importance to the emerging culture and the church.

PART 1
THE EMERGING CHURCH: CONVERSATION, MOVEMENT, STREAMS, AND PREACHERS

Part one of this work provides a basic historical overview of the emerging church movement in addition to introducing a selection of its key leaders. Presentation of this content will cover two chapters. Chapter two provides a basic profile of the emerging church looking at its initial conception as a conversation, its growth into a movement, its splitting into diverse streams, and its current influence upon the contemporary church. Resources used and perspective given for this historical summary will primarily be extracted from the work of the four selected preachers, but not exclusively. Utilization of writings from other emerging church leaders will also be incorporated; the aim being to highlight common traits found among emerging churches and to demonstrate the broad reach of the movement.[1]

Chapter three introduces four key emerging church leaders by examining their beginnings and current association within the movement, their past and present influence upon it, and the reason or grounds for their inclusion in this work—as representing a significant sample of the preaching within the emerging church.

[1] Critique from this author about theology, philosophy, and/or methodology concerning the preaching ministry within the emerging church will be limited, if not entirely void in this section.

CHAPTER 2
THE EMERGING CHURCH PROFILE

Introduction

Presenting a profile on the emerging church presents a unique challenge.[1] Having many bedfellows and a chameleon-like nature makes it difficult to define.[2] The movement is wide-ranging in that its influence has been manifested across mainline congregations and non-denominational evangelical churches alike (predominantly Protestant, young, and mostly white[3])—yet not limited to North America, but prevalent in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe.[4] Many Christians associated with the emerging church describe it as having no single model church to emulate but rather prides itself on

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[1] Gilley describes this challenge from the perspective of the movement being slippery. By slippery he means, "That the movement is so new, so fragmented, so varied, that nailing it down is like nailing the proverbial JELL-O to the wall." See Gary E. Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home: A faithful church in deceptive times* (Webster: Evangelical, 2006), 142. Cf. Mark Liederbach and Alvin Reid, *The Convergent Church: Missional Worshippers in an Emerging Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 78–79, where they compare the challenge of defining the movement to being "as difficult as trying to catch fish with one's bare hands. Just when you think you have a handle on it, the idea shifts and eludes your grasp."

[2] Two authors who refer to the movement as having many or strange bedfellows are Michael Moynagh, *Emergingchurch.intro* (Grand Rapids: Monarch, 2004), 11, and Andy Crouch, "The Emerging Mystique," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 13 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/011/12.36.html. Crouch refers to the movement as having strange bedfellows based on the present diversity of style and substance among participants. For an example of the use of the term chameleon to describe the emerging church see James K. A. Smith, "The Emerging Church," *Reformed Worship*, 77 (Sept. 2005): 40. John MacArthur refers to the movement as being "very diverse and still developing." See John MacArthur, "Perspicuity of Scripture: The Emergent Approach," *TMSJ* 17/2 (Fall 2006): 142.

[3] Crouch describes the movement as "frequently urban, disproportionately young, overwhelmingly white. . . ." See Crouch, "The Emerging Mystique." Tony Jones refers to the early years of the movement as being "predominantly white and male," which he acknowledges as being a weakness—"one that we have done much to amend." See endnote 1 in Tony Jones, "Friendship, Faith, and Going Somewhere Together," in *An Emergent Manifesto Of Hope*, eds., Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 12. See also Janet I. Tu, "'Emerging churches' drawing young flock," *Theooze*, n.p. [cited 25 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://www.theooze.com/articles/print.cfm?=418.

[4] Smith, "The Emerging Church," 40, and Emergent Village, "Emergent Worldwide," *Emergent Village Web Site*, n.p. [cited 5 Sept. 2005]. Online: http://www.emergentvillage.com/Site/Explore/EmergentStory/index.htm. Although the emerging church is geographically dispersed overseas, this work will limit discussion to its influence in North America.

diversity reflected in fresh expressions of authentic church shaped by the local context and culture.[5]

Some insiders, due to the immense diversity and fragmentation, prefer not to identify the emerging church as a movement. This adds to the difficulty of defining what it is and what it stands for with any degree of precision.[6] Brian McLaren, considered by some to be the spokesperson of the emerging church, dismisses any terms that imply centralized leadership, agendas, and/or control. Commenting on Emergent, an emerging church network, he states that "right now" it is "a conversation, not a movement."[7] Equally he rejects it as a program or a model—"I think we must begin as a conversation, then grow as a friendship, and see if a movement comes of it."[8] Gibbs and Bolger have discovered that many emerging church leaders struggle to give clarity to the movement when asked to define it. They ascribe this problem to the challenge of defining something new while they are in the midst of discarding what they are "emerging from" as they create what they are "emerging into."[9]

Rick McKinley, pastor of Imago Dei, warns of the danger of even asking the emerging church to define itself. He likens it to "the equivalent of telling a ten-year old to declare what his major in college is going to be."[10] McKinley believes such premature labeling has the potential to squelch the "beautiful expressions" of the emerging church that are "sprouting up all over the place." To put these "organic works of the Spirit of God" into camps too soon is no different than "scaring the hell out of" the ten-year old who is

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[5] Moynagh, *Emergingchurch.intro*, 1, 24.

[6] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 29. Cf. Liederbach and Reid, *Convergent Church*, 79. Smith states that the emerging church cannot even be considered an "it" since it is not a denomination or organized group of churches. He describes the emerging church as a "growing sensibility in the contemporary church" and/or a "postmodern sensibility." See Smith, "The Emerging Church," 40.

[7] See Brian McLaren, quoted in Andy Crouch, "The Emerging Mystique," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 13 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/011/12.36.html.

[8] Ibid. The Emergent network can be found online at www.emergentvillage.org.

[9] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 28. Phil Johnson, writing from outside the movement, discusses the challenge of analyzing and critiquing the emerging church. He writes, "The movement is a typically postmodern phenomenon—deliberately diverse, perplexingly amorphous, and constantly in flux. It has no clear homogeneity in doctrine, philosophy, or practice." See Phil Johnson, "Joyriding on the Downgrade at Breakneck Speed: The Dark Side of Diversity," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 212.

[10] Rick McKinley, "My Thoughts on the Emerging Church," *Rick McKinley 's Blog*, n.p. [cited 1 Jan. 2008]. Online: http://www.rickmckinley.net/. All the McKinley quotes in this paragraph are taken from this source.

forced to declare his major before it is time. Thus, the varied, growing, and evolving nature of this movement, in addition to the reluctance or rejection of some leaders to provide a profile (at least at this juncture), presents a conundrum in defining the emerging church—at least in a way that captures the whole of the movement while providing balanced representation to each diverse expression. Like "nailing Jell-O to the wall," Kevin DeYoung writes, in his critique of the emerging church, "The 'what' and 'who' of the movement are almost impossible to define."[11] One definition that fits-all simply cannot be ascribed to those who resonate and/or align with the emerging church.

In spite of the emerging church manifesting a plethora of expressions that operate out of a highly decentralized framework, one can identify common characteristics among these churches and leaders. These identifiable traits present enough common ground to enable a definition or representative profile to be assigned to it—albeit amorphous and continually evolving.[12] For the purposes of this basic introduction, a four-category profile will suffice covering the following aspects of the movement: origin and pioneers, modern to postmodern, core characteristics, and types and streams.

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[11] Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 17. DeYoung states that any new movement will always be "more amorphous and less codified."

[12] Moynagh speaks to varied expressions seen within the emerging movement—"New kids on the block range from GenX church, to children's church, to cell church, to pub church, to arts-based church, to post-Alpha church, to Menu-church and many more." See Moynagh, *Emergingchurch.intro*, 13.

The following list encompasses some basic characteristics of the emerging church that can be found expressed in a number of their writings and websites (www.vintagefaith.com.; www.emergentvillage.org.; www.next-wave.org.; www.Sacramentis.com.; www.theooze.com.): 1. Highly creative approaches to worship and spiritual reflection involving a plethora of approaches including ancient customs. 2. A minimalist and decentralized organizational structure. 3. A flexible approach to theology whereby individual differences in belief and morality are accepted within reason. 4. A holistic view of the role of the church in society—emphasizing fellowship, social action, community building and Christian outreach. 5. A desire to reanalyze the Bible against the context with the goal of revealing a multiplicity of valid perspectives rather than a single valid interpretation. 6. A continual re-examination of theology. 7. A high value placed on creating communities. For the listing of these seven traits, see Wikipedia, "Emerging Church," *Wikipedia Web Site*, n.p. [cited 29 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EmergingChurch.

Origins and Pioneers

The genesis of the emerging church traces back to the early-to-mid 1990s.[13] During this time Generation X ministry had become the hip trend among young pastors.[14] Networking ministry groups such as Leighton Ford Ministries, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Young Leaders Network, supported this new strategic ministry interest by hosting conferences while publishers helped boost the movement through book deals.[15] By the late 1990s, the Gen-X theme began to fade with the emphasis shifting to the topic of postmodernity. The hub of early postmodernity discussions involved discerning whether it was something to be embraced or discarded—good or bad.[16] Many of the pioneering young pastors involved in these early discussions have since emerged as key leaders within the emerging church.

Credit must be shared with Leadership Network for bringing these founding leaders together and thus playing an embryonic role in the dawn of the emerging church.[17] Leadership Network birthed the Young Leaders Network (YLN) led by Doug Pagitt whose employed services helped organize a band of young speakers to initially converse on trendy Generation X ministries.[18] Some of these young leaders who made the transition from a

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[13] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 32. See chapter two for a discussion on the birth of the emerging church that discusses the differences between the emerging church and a generational approach to church life.

[14] Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.: Hard Lessons From An Emerging Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 97. See chapter four, "We're Not In Kansas Anymore," in Alvin Reid, *Radically Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 73-88, for a definition and discussion on Generation-X and their coming of age at the rise of postmodernism. Reid, drawing from Gary McIntosh, *Three Generations* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1995), passim, describes Gen-X on page 93 as disillusioned, abandoned, seeking high-quality life, independent, defensive, change is good, relational, pluralistic, and pragmatic.

[15] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 32. Some of the influential Gen-X books included Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, *Inside the Soul of a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Kevin Graham Ford, *Jesus for a New Generation: Putting the Gospel in the Language of Gen-Xers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995); and George Barna, *Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 1994).

[16] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 32.

[17] Leadership network was founded in 1984 by Bob Buford. For information on Buford go to his ministry website online: www.activeenergy.net. Leadership Network's mission is to foster "church innovation and growth through strategies, programs, tools, and resources consistent with our far-reaching mission: to identify, connect and help high-capacity leaders multiply their impact." See Leadership Network, "Mission Statement," *Leadership Network Web Site*, n.p. [cited 3 Dec. 2007]. Online: www.leadnet.org.

[18] Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, 98. Tony Jones credits Leadership Network and the hiring of Doug Pagitt in 1997 to develop a network of innovative young pastors as the beginnings of the emerging church. See Tony Jones, "Friendship, Faith, and Going Somewhere Together," 12.

Generation X platform to a broader discussion of engaging the postmodern culture with Christianity included Chris Seay, Dan Kimball, Tony Jones, Mark Driscoll, and Dieter Zander, along with the eventual addition of a more seasoned pastor by the name of Brian McLaren.[19]

Driscoll identifies the mid-1990s as the time of this shift from Gen-X to postmodern discussion. In his work, *The Radical Reformission*, which introduces one vision of the missional motivation behind the emerging church, he describes the shift as follows: "The conversation among young pastors has evolved from reaching Generation X, to ministering in a postmodern culture, to a more mature and profitable investigation of what a movement of missionaries would look like, missionaries sent not from America to another nation but from America to America."[20] Upon the disbanding of the Young Leadership Network, around the close of the last decade, a new team emerged called the Terra Nova Project, whose leadership consisted of some of the same men such as McLaren and Pagitt—with the exclusion of Driscoll.[21] This group dissolved rather quickly but soon resurfaced as a new entity having morphed into the Emergent Village.[22]

This transition from Gen-X to postmodern discussion among the pioneers of the emerging church evolved from a realization, according to Gibbs and Bolger, "that the evangelistic challenge for the church was not generational angst but a philosophical disconnect with the wider culture."[23] Many of these

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[19] Ibid., 97-98. McLaren describes himself as having been "grandfathered in as the network's 'old guy.'" See Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 275.

[20] Mark Driscoll, *The Radical Reformission: reaching out without selling out* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 18.

[21] According to McLaren, the Terranova Project was an initiative to explore how Christian faith would reconfigure in the postmodern matrix. See Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), x.

Driscoll writes and speaks of his departure from these leaders of the Terra Nova Project. He sites his theological differences with men like Pagitt and McLaren, along with the need to focus attention on his church, as the reason for his separation. An example of his desired departure from this group is evidenced when he writes of his uneasiness of receiving credit from the leaders of the Terra Nova project when they first launched their web site. See Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformation Rev.*, 99, and/or listen to Driscoll's lecture given at the 2007 Convergence Conference hosted by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. See Mark Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture." *SEBTS Web Site*, n.p. [cited 4 Nov. 2007]. Online: http//www.sebts.edu/convergent/generalinfo/.

[22] McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy,* 275. McLaren describes some of this transition of teams with Pagitt and the meaning behind the name Emergent in chapter 19. Also, see Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 32.

[23] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 32.

young pastors believed that what they were experiencing as major shifts in the culture could no longer be addressed by a sociological approach to church, such as adjusting worship venues to appease Gen-Xers.[24] Karen Ward, pastor of Church of the Apostle, Seattle, Washington, to whom some give credit for coining the term "emerging church," described the ministry challenges associated with the changes in culture as "much bigger than generational grouping."[25] For Ward, a cultural mega-shift was in full swing that would, in time, impact everyone. She believes that Generation X—like the Marines being the first ones on the beach—may have ushered in this new reality, yet ultimately, "every generation hereafter will be postmodern."[26]

Kimball echoes Ward's assessment in *The Emerging Church* where he devotes an entire chapter, "More Than a Generation Gap," to provide evidence that a broader age range of people—more than those narrowly identified within the Generation X demographic born from 1964–1983—resonate with a postmodern world view.[27] In harmony with Ward and other emerging church leaders, Kimball asserts, "A major worldview shift such as this is more than just a generational issue."[28] Churches have discovered that an entire new worldview has emerged that finds its existence not in a particular age range but rather in a completely new way of thinking about life and life's values.[29]

Thus, a shift from modern to postmodern culture, or from modern Christianity to postmodern Christianity, became the inescapable hot topic and driving *pathos* for these young pastors.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 30, 33. Karen Ward founded a web site in 1999 using the term emerging church, which can be found online: (www.EmergingChurch.org). Little did she know at the time that this term would be used for what is now considered to be an international church movement. Ward's congregation resides just a few miles apart from Driscoll's church, Mars Hill, located in Seattle, Washington.

[26] Ibid., 33. Celek and Zander identify the Gen-Xers or busters as the first generation that will be raised and educated in a postmodern culture. See Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, *Inside the Soul of a New Generation*, 20. Cf. Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 110. Stetzer also identifies that "the transition between modernism and postmodernism took place in and among what has been commonly called 'Generation X.'" Chapter 10 of this work, "Emerging Postmodern Generations," provides a useful overview of the modern to postmodern shift.

[27] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 57–66.

[28] Ibid., 63.

[29] Ibid. McLaren, in his book *A New Kind of Christian*, gives the implication that thirty to forty percent of baby boomers (1946–1964) lean more toward postmodernism. See McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian,* 44. Older folks who have postmodern tendencies, he believes, simply keep quiet about them.

Traditional or modernistic practices of Christianity ceased being the only way to do church or to know God in a postmodern culture—thus releasing all constraints to re-imagine or re-create what the church could be or should be in the context of ministering in and to a postmodern generation.[30]

Modern to Postmodern

According to emerging church leaders, what does ministering in a postmodern culture mean or look like and how is this different from ministering in a modern culture? Defining postmodernism, similar to defining the emerging church, has its challenges.[31] The reason for this lies with the unknown starting and end dates of postmodernity in addition to the rapid and evolving nature of the subject.[32] When did postmodernism begin? When will it end? How much has postmodernism shaped the culture? Will the influence of postmodernism continue? Has postmodernism already passed?[33] According to Kimball, these are questions that cannot be definitively answered since postmodernism is still in the developing process.[34] Yet like the emerging church, there are basic traits that link definitions for postmodernism. Post simply means after and when linked to modernism means after modernism.[35] Therefore, postmodernism reflects a worldview, personal presuppositions that serve as the foundation of life's purpose and meaning, that has

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[30] Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 17–18. Pagitt writes of the lack of progressive change in the church in stating, "We have revolutionized how we live and nearly all that we believe, know, and understand—but much of the thinking and practices of Christianity have stubbornly stayed the same." He goes on to say, "Perhaps we as Christians today are not only to consider what it means to be a 21st century church, but also—and perhaps more importantly—what it means to have a 21st century faith."

[31] Missiologist Ed Stetzer, in writing on how to plant new churches in a postmodern culture, acknowledges the challenge of defining postmodernism. He argues the notion of categorizing postmoderns under a neat and tidy label should be set aside—especially in light of the fact that they tend to despise labels. See Stetzer, *Planting New Churches*, 110–12.

[32] Reid highlights an analogy offered by Timothy George in discussing the challenge of defining postmodernism. "Timothy George and others have referred to this time as an ecotone, a time when two or more ecosystems combine. An estuary, where fresh water from a river meets the salt water of the ocean, is an example. The move from modernism to postmodernism is a cultural ecotone." See Reid, *Radically Unchurched,* 75.

[33] Driscoll writes of his overzealous involvement with reading books on culture/postmodernism in the mid 1990s. He has since redirected this passion, warning pastors to spend their time more wisely than camping out in the "'debated fools' parade of books on the matter." See Driscoll, *The Radical Reformission Rev.*, 95, and Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, 203–5; footnote 10.

[34] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 47.

[35] Ibid., 49.

emerged out of modernism while concurrently reflects many aspects of modernity. It none-the-less has its own unique identity.[36]

What are these identifying traits of modernity and postmodernity? Common traits associated with a modern worldview or what Kimball refers to as "pure modernism" include the following: "single, universal worldview and moral standard, a belief that all knowledge is good and certain, truth is absolute, individualism is valued, and thinking, learning, and beliefs should be determined systematically and logically."[37] In contrast, Kimball asserts that postmodernism rejects a "single universal worldview"[38]in addition to holding that "all truth is not absolute, community is valued over individualism, and thinking, learning, and beliefs can be determined nonlinearly."[39] A dichotomy, then, exists between two worldviews with postmodern philosophy calling into question foundational values and ideas that are at the core of the modern mind-set.[40]

The ministry tension created by the transition between these two diverse cultural mindsets creates a unique challenge for the Christian practitioner. Kimball exposes this challenge utilizing a soil analogy in describing the differences between a person being raised

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[36] Ibid. Kimball defines postmodernism as "a change in worldview moving from the values and beliefs of the modern era to the new postmodern era, which rejects many modern values and beliefs."

[37] Ibid., 49. McLaren, through the fictional character Neo, provides ten basic tenets of modernity referring to them as the age of : (1) conquest and control, (2) machine, (3) analysis, (4) secular science, (5) objectivity, (6) critical—meaning debate, dialectic, argument, discussion, (7) modern nation-state and organization, (8) individualism, (9) Protestantism and institutional religion, and (10) consumerism. See McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, 16–19. See also Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 15–18, for a listing and overview of the basic tenets of modernity in addition to postmodernity.

[38] This can also be referred to as meta-narrative. Stetzer defines meta-narrative as a "unifying cultural value that explains and gives purpose to life, meaning, and existence." Christianity is offered as one example of a meta-narrative for it includes "truth, meaning for life, and the purpose of our existence." Postmoderns reject such meta-narratives about life choosing to create what Stetzer classifies as "mini-narratives"—in other words, they create and write their own stories. Consequently, postmoderns reject claims of truth tied to any given meta-narrative. Instead, truth is defined, expressed, and carried out based on community within a given context. See Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 123–25.

[39] Ibid., 49–50.

[40] Stanley Grenz defines postmodernism as "an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set." See Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmands, 1996), 12. Postmodern leader Jean-Francois Lyotard, defines postmodernism in terms of rejecting single universal world views. He writes, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives." See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, "Theory and History of Literature," vol. 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv, quoted from Stetzer, *Planting Churches in a Postmodern Age,* 124.

in a modern (A.D. 1500–2000) versus postmodern (beginning c. A.D. 2000) culture. The so-called nutrients of modern soil include monotheism, rational, religion, propositional, systematic, local, individualistic and truth. A modern person, even if not religious, typically operates out of a Judeo-Christian worldview. Conversely, the postmodern soil is comprised of pluralism, experiential, mystical, narrative, fluid, global, communal/tribal, and preference. A postmodern person's religious worldview reflects a tolerance, acceptance, and equality among all religions and an ethic derived from acceptance within culture and personal choice influenced by media and peers.[41] Christianity, as one option among many, is often perceived from a negative viewpoint.[42]

The net result for the emerging church in realizing, identifying, and quantifying the cultural shift to postmodernism was the need for a new approach to ministry and Christianity at large. Revolutionary leader Brian McLaren is known for single-handedly catapulting the emerging church movement into the spotlight of postmodern Christian discourse. McLaren wrestled with the mega-cultural shift of doing ministry in the postmodern matrix in his book *The Church on the Other Side*. In this work, he invites the church of the twenty-first century to become an insider to the world of postmodernity. He writes, "As Christians who want to live and love on the other side, we had better get a feel for postmodernity from the inside, because in many ways postmodernity is the other side, and it defines reality for more and more people."[43] Five core realities of this new postmodern mindset presented by McLaren include being skeptical of certainty, sensitive to context, more humorous toward approaching life, highly valuing subjective experience, and cherishing togetherness—focusing on similarities more than divisive differences.[44]

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[41] Stetzer points to the Oprah Winfrey Show as one good example of "postmodernism expressed through popular media." If Scripture is brought to the forefront in a discussion as representing universal truth (meta-narrative), a common response from Oprah might be, "That may be true for you, but who are we to judge, as long as people are happy and are not hurting anyone else." See Stetzer, *Planting New Churches*, 134. This relativistic/tolerant/postmodern mindset consumes most facets of modern media.

[42] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 59–60.

[43] Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 159.

[44] Ibid., 162–66. Pagitt repeated this theme often at the *Zondervan Emerging Church Conference*, held in Seattle, Washington, June 1–2, 2007 (taken from notes as a personal attendee of this conference).

A new reality requires new approaches to ministry. McLaren offers fifteen such strategies or changes needed in order to capitalize on ministry opportunities within this new postmodern world. Some of these changes include a more humble apologetic and hermeneutic in regard to faith and truth—realizing that postmodern's are "sensitive to overstatements that nudge faith toward dogmatism";[45] a need to magnify or help bring about a resurgence of the value of faith over and against an unbalanced Christianity fixated on scientific certainty; more reflection and space to experience life and faith without legalistic censoring or restrictions; listen and share more stories instead of formulating all of our experiences into a propositional framework; and an increased awareness and practice of art, music, literature, and drama in communicating the message.[46] For McLaren, the new postmodern approach to ministry is possible, but will require the church to "de-bug its faith from the viruses of modernity"—such as the control, mechanistic, objective, analytic, reductionistic, scientific, individualistic, organizational, and consumerist viruses.[47] It has become the missional passion of the emerging church to embrace this new reality of living and ministering in a postmodern context—realizing that radically different approaches to ministry must ensue. As Kimball asserts, "The ministry methods we used for moderns are going to differ from what's used for postmodern's."[48] So what, in light of the diversity already spoken of among emerging churches, are basic ministry practices by which the emerging church identifies itself within a postmodern context?

Core Characteristics

Gibb's and Bolger's assessment of the emerging church identified nine common practices within the movement with the disclaimer that not all emerging churches adhere to all nine. These nine practices are as follows: "(1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, (3) live highly communal lives, (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9)

[45] McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 173.
[46] Ibid., see chapter 12b.
[47] Ibid., 189–97.
[48] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 63.

take part in spiritual activities."[49] Of these nine identified practices, the first three represent core traits embraced by most emerging churches while the remaining qualify as being derivatives of the first three.[50] A closer look into these first three foundational practices warrants further discussion.

First, what do emerging churches mean by following the way of Jesus? Within this discussion, three primary emphases emerge. First, being a follower of Jesus means rediscovering the humanity and/or incarnation of Jesus, as witnessed in the gospels and Philippians 2:1–11. Second, it involves understanding Jesus as a missionary in culture.[51] Third, it means embracing Jesus' message about the kingdom of God as a new way of life. All three of these emphases point to modeling the life of Jesus—the one who "inaugurated the reign of God on earth"—by living out and ushering others to the kingdom of God through communal practices, which are marked by service and forgiveness toward others.[52] This incarnational *missio Dei* mindset, go versus come to us, of being about the kingdom of God on earth, as a follower of Jesus

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[49] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 45.

[50] Ibid. Pagitt offers his own list of emerging church practices for *RelevantMagazine.Com*. In this article he list the following seven "tendencies, passions, and perspectives": (1) Emerging Churches strive to be positive about the future, (2) Churches within the emerging community are committed to God in the way of Jesus, (3) The Kingdom of God is a central conversation in emerging communities, (4) The emerging church values communal life – living like family, (5) Emerging Churches seek to live as missional communities, (6) Friendship and hospitality are transformational pieces in the emerging church, (7) Communities in the emerging movement value theology. See Doug Pagitt, "Unraveling Emergent," *Relevant Magazine*, n.p. [cited 17 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.relevantmagazine .com/god_article.php?id=6365&print=true. Cf. Tim Conder, *The Church in Transition: The Journey of Existing Churches into the Emerging Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 13. Liederbach and Reid's assessment of the movement identifies six convictions of the emerging church movement. They include the following: "vintage (or historic faith), missional emphasis, holistic orthopraxy, communal authenticity, contextual relevance, and postevangelical movement" (86). See Liederbach and Reid, *Convergent Church*, 86–97.

Two works that define the theological direction of the movement include: Ray Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), and Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God* (Brewster: Paraclete, 2006). McLaren, Kimball, and Pagitt endorse Anderson's book while McLaren writes the foreword for Rollin's work.

[51] Driscoll sees a direct correlation between these first two emphases. Writing on the subject of Christ and the postmodern culture he states that an "incarnational Christology paves the way for a robust missiology." See Mark Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 128. He describes the emerging church's draw to the incarnation of Christ as a "glorious rediscovery of a biblical truth" (130). Additionally he states that this rediscovery of a robust missiology is a "wonderful upside of a rigorous understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ" (128). However, the problem he identifies within some streams of the emerging church is the limited or denied focus on the deity of Christ.

[52] See Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 47–64, for a summary of what they discovered it means for emerging churches to identify with Jesus.

in culture, defines what it means to identify with the life of Jesus and in essence provides the meaning of the gospel for many within the emerging church.[53]

McLaren refers to this new kind of gospel as a "world-blessing gospel."[54] A world-blessing gospel bucks a self-centered individualistic approach to God and calls the church to re-imagine what it would be like to embrace the poor, the forgotten, the alien, the widow, the orphan, the oppressed, the least, the last, and the lost of society—as seen in the life and message of Jesus.[55] It also is a gospel that emerges beyond a modern, Western, white man's Christianity that is "hyperconfident" and exudes a fixation on "getting our fine wide souls in heaven, and between now and then, into better circumstances here on earth."[56] This narrow modernistic version of the gospel, that limits salvation to the individual, must be re-examined.[57] McLaren insists "I don't think we have the gospel right yet" and for him it doesn't mean, "I'm going to heaven after I die."[58] Before modernity, no one accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior, walked an aisle for salvation, or received a ticket to heaven from saying the sinner's prayer.[59] Pagitt echoes this new kind of identification with Jesus as going "beyond mere belief in commands and into a life that's in rhythm with God."[60] Thus, the message for McLaren and other emerging church leaders, but not all, seeks to free the gospel from the grip of abstract, propositional truths about personal salvation and eternal security. Rather, the gospel emphasis

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[53] Ibid., 47.

[54] Brian McLaren, "It's All About Who, Jesus?" *Leadership Journal.net*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2004/cln40830.html.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid. McLaren refers to much of Christianity in the United States as being associated with "American hyperconfidence, white privilege, institutional racism, civil religion, neocolonialism, and nationalistic militarism—often fortified by a privatized faith in a privatized nationalistic/tribal god." See Brian McLaren, "Church Emerging: Or Why I still Use the Word Postmodern but with Mixed Feelings," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, eds. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 148.

[57] Tim Keel, emerging church pastor of Jacob's Well, describes this Western, scientific view of the gospel as a view that has produced "an anemic faith stripped of its wildness," which, like a domesticated animal in captivity, can "loose the ability to produce offspring." Facts alone are no longer adequate or inspiring when it comes to the gospel. What needs to be rediscovered is the voice of the mystics, artists, contemplatives, poets, and prophets. See Tim Keel, "Leading from the Margins: The Role of Imagination in Our Changing Context," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, eds., Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 228–29.

[58] Crouch, "The Emerging Mystique."

[59] Ibid.

[60] Pagitt, "Unraveling Emergent."

shifts from the person to the community as individuals unite to live out the life of Jesus in helping to serve and redeem the world.

Mark 1:15–16—"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"— presents the scriptural basis for this new or restored understanding of the gospel.[61] Jesus announcing the kingdom on earth in essence is the good news. Gibbs and Bolger explain: "At the outset of the gospel narrative, the good news was not that Jesus was to die on the cross to forgive sins but that God had returned and all were invited to participate with him in this new way of life, in this redemption of the world."[62] This retrieval of the incarnational life of Jesus, joined to the redemptive *missio Dei* of the world as expressed verbally through Christ's Sermon on the Mount, leads emerging churches to participate with God by leaning outward (not inward) toward humanity.[63] Outward acts of social reform and community involvement against injustices within culture are defining aspects of the gospel. These deeds of humanitarian service offer a visible expression of what it means to identify with the kingdom of God here on earth—as a follower of Jesus.[64]

A second practice of emerging churches involves transforming the secular realm, which requires a rejection of all notions of dualism in culture. The notion of a secular space, one in which God does not exist, is considered a modern construction that must be overcome—for as the psalmist proclaims "The earth is the Lord's and *everything* in it" (Ps 24:1 NIV, emphasis added).[65] Modernity's desire to classify, systematize, and categorize all aspects of life—creating a secular/sacred divide—has affected all aspects of

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[61] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 54.

[62] Ibid. A confidential disclosure by one emerging church leader on this subject shared the following: "We have totally reprogrammed ourselves to recognize the good news as a means to an end—that the kingdom of God is here. We try to live into that reality and hope. We don't dismiss the cross; it is still a central part. But the good news is not that he died but that the kingdom has come" (54) (emphasis added).

[63] Ibid., 64.

[64] For some it appears the kingdom of God has become synonymous with the gospel. This is a change from a traditional view of the gospel being defined via 1 Cor. 15. McKinley offers an analysis of two views of the gospel in *The Beautiful Mess*. He argues for the church to both live out the gospel through doing good deeds as part of the kingdom of God and to proclaim the gospel as the means to personal salvation. Expressing the danger of loosing one or the other, he writes, "If all we value is the salvation gospel, we tend to miss the rest of Christ's message. Taken out of the context of the kingdom, the call to faith in Christ gets reduced to something less than the New Testament teaches. The reverse is also true: If we value a kingdom gospel at the expense of the liberating message of the cross and the empty tomb and a call to repentance, we miss a central tenet of kingdom life. Without faith in Jesus, there is no transferring of our lives into the new world of the kingdom." See Rick McKinley, *This Beautiful Mess* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 177–80.

[65] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 66–67.

the church.[66] It is the aim of emerging churches, in light of ministering in a postmodern culture, to deconstruct this division by reclaiming all of life as sacred.[67] Dualisms such as natural verses supernatural, body verses the mind and spirit, or faith verses reason, simply need not exist.[68] Rather, the emerging church seeks to dismantle everything secular aiming for a holistic approach to life with Christ—a new church reality where no secular or non-spiritual domains exist.[69]

Rob Bell addresses an example of this concept in *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*. Christians often refer to work done by and within the church as sacred, while work done outside the church as secular, thus creating an unnecessary dichotomy (pastor-sacred/actor-secular). Bell argues, referencing the teachings of the Apostle Paul (Col 3:23–24), that all work is sacred for a Christian if it is done with passion and devotion unto the Lord Jesus.[70] To refer to any job held by an authentic Christian as secular should be considered oxymoronic. Bell explains, "This is why it is impossible for a Christian to have a secular job. If you follow Jesus and you are doing what you do in his name, then it is no longer secular work; it's sacred. You are there; God is there. The difference is our awareness."[71]

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[66] McLaren argues that the church needs to debug itself from these vises of modernity, such as the control, mechanistic, objective, analytic, reductionistic, scientific, individualistic, organizational, and consumerist viruses. See McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 189–97.

[67] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 66. Bolger and Gibbs refer to this process as "Sacrilization." Sacrilization is defined as "the process of making all of life sacred, represents the interaction of kingdom and culture."

[68] Ibid. 67. Pagitt, emerging church pastor of Solomon's Porch, states that one of their aims is to "be formed into people living in harmony with God through what we do with our bodies as well as what we do with our hearts, souls, and minds." He refers to this practice of using one's body as an act of worship and spiritual formation as "physicality." Some examples of physicality at Solomon's porch include the following: yoga classes, communion as a full-body participatory experience; the use of the body as a means of prayer; anointing with oil; the use of labyrinths; and massage therapy. See Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 84–109, for a full discussion of physicality—an act which eliminates the fallacy of the body/spirit divide.

[69] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 67–68.

[70] Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 84–85.

[71] Ibid., 85. Other notable comments of Bell's on this subject are as follows: "I don't believe something has to be in a church service to be 'for God.'" "A church is a community of people who are learning how to be certain kinds of people wherever they find themselves, so they can do whatever it is they do 'in the name of the Lord Jesus.'" "The goal isn't to bring everyone's work into the church; the goal is for the church to be these unique kinds of people who are transforming the places they live and work and play because they understand the whole earth is filled with the *kavod* of God. God isn't in one building only. Doing things for God happens all the time, everywhere."

Other applications of this non-dualist vision appear in varied practices within the emerging church. Examples include the use of what might be considered secular music, film, and literature in worship; a fresh engagement with visual or image based culture;[72] a nonlinear approach to the message where overlapping activities vie for attention during worship;[73] a welcoming of both transcendence and immanence; worship that acknowledges both mind and body; and evangelism as a way life in conversation instead of a result-based confrontation.[74] Thus, the emerging church values a whole-life, holistic spirituality that encompasses all spaces in life. Having examined the top two core emerging church practices, identifying life with Jesus and transforming secular space, let us now move to the final core trait of living in community.

The final emerging church practice for this profile discussion highlights the emerging church's desire to live highly communal lives, which flows out of their conviction to live the way of Jesus. The communal way of Jesus for the emerging church rejects the notion of defining itself as brick and mortar assemblies that take place on a given Sunday morning as an institutional act. Nor is the communal way of Jesus limited to weekly "supplemental small-group programs." Rather, like Jesus, a community of faith is about people, relationships, and movement, not place, rank, rugs,

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[72] Mike Perschon presents a theological and pragmatic position paper on the use of secular film for worship, spiritual growth, and missional engagement for kingdom purposes. He refers to this use of film for kingdom work as Cinemaprophecy. Cinemaprophecy is defined as "having, or communicating, a transformational spiritual experience through the medium of popular film." Perschon's main thesis resides on the notion that Christian's, by engaging in the consumption of the movie industry, can learn the "visual language" of film "in order to communicate the gospel." Thus "Cinemaprophets fulfill the Great Commission by being a moviegoer, sitting side by side in theatres with non-believers." In addition to Perschon's encouragement to drink in the culture with the aim of redeeming it he also offers boundaries to consider realizing the potential dangers of being a Cinemaprophet. See Mike Perschon, "Cinemaprophecy: Reel Faith," *Theooze*, n.p. [cited 25 Oct. 2005]. Online: http://www.theooze.com/articles/print.cfm?id=712.

[73] See Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, Chapters 12–17, for discussion on the need for multisensory and interactive services where the preaching includes art, music, sacred spaces, and silence. Some emerging church services offer background music, displayed artwork, and participation in various activities all while the teaching is being presented.

[74] Ibid., 281. Kimball presents a discussion on the shift in values from a modern church approach to evangelism compared to an emerging church approach. For a modern church "evangelism is a message" and for an emerging church "evangelism is a conversation." Kimball quotes Brian McLaren as stating the following about this shift in emphasis: "Out: Evangelism as sales pitch, as conquest, as warfare, as ultimatum, as threat, as proof, as argument, as entertainment, as show, a monologue, as something you have to do. In: Disciple-making as conversation, as friendship, as influence, as invitation, as companionship, as challenge, as opportunity, as conversation, as dance, as something you get to do." See Brian McLaren, quoted from Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 197. A succinct discussion of each of these aspects of transforming the secular realm offered in this paragraph can be found in Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 68–81.

and static institutions. Identification with this type of community of faith, the emerging church, extends beyond a brief Sunday or Wednesday respite from the world to an all-day, every-day committed people immersed in local culture.[75] It is a community identified with Jesus seeking to live "the way of Jesus in every sphere of society."[76] The communal lifestyle of the emerging church reflects a kingdom first ecclesiology with the church's mission to prepare the way or actualize the kingdom in the here and now. The redemptive message of many emerging communities of faith is weighted toward the gospel of the kingdom not the gospel of salvation.[77] For emerging churches, this represents a new ecclesiology or rather an ancient one that reinstitutes missions as the central thrust and integral part of the church.[78]

So what does it take to create a missional emerging church living as community and/or what does it look like in practice?[79] According to the research of Gibbs and Bolger, it will require a "radical restructuring, redirecting, and reenergizing of the church"—in other words, a complete deconstruction of traditional or modernistic church practices.[80] Modernistic church ideas such as the autonomy of the individual, success measured by economics, numbers and size, Christians coming to church instead of being the church, or the church being defined as the building, church structured as a business, consumer church where participants shop to get their spiritual needs met, clean and crisp worship, church focused on big celebration and a high profile preacher, church as meeting and church measured by performance, must undergo a

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[75] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 90.

[76] Ibid., 89.

[77] Pagitt acknowledges two aspects of the gospel—kingdom life and teaching about Jesus—while emphasizing that the church has drastically erred in its "overemphasis on teaching about Jesus (death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and promised return of Jesus) to the exclusion of the call to the Kingdom of life." Drawing from kingdom of God emphasis in Acts 28:30–31 and Mark 1:15, he raises the following question, "Could it be that the Good News of Jesus talked about was less a call to believe in the things that happened to him or would happen to and through him than an invitation into Kingdom life"? See Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 31–35.

McKinley, as discussed in footnote 56, strives for a balance between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of salvation. Yet, like many emerging church leaders, he sees that a great weakness in the church today has been the limiting of the gospel just to salvation—"we've shrunk the Good News to a short list of words that will save a soul from hell." See McKinley, *This Beautiful Mess*, 93.

[78] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 91.

[79] Pagitt's work, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith*, offers a look into the life of Solomon's Porch (one week) by examining their activities/practices as they seek holistic spiritual formation as a community of Jesus followers.

[80] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 95.

complete Ty Pennington-like makeover.[81] A radical dismantling must occur if the church is to re-position itself with the kingdom of God in like fashion to Jesus for "when Jesus levels everything, then everything is up for grabs."[82] For the emerging church this means deconstructing the church from its modernistic views of success. Pagitt identifies these toxic success traits as "tangible evidence such as size, market share, political influence, healthy budgets, and the creation of model citizens living the American Dream." Rather, the church needs reconstructing as a communal people seeking to live in harmony with God from the vantage of point of the gospel of the kingdom.[83]

The re-building of the church as a communal people will identify with a number of values. Those values may include active participation by all, space to share stories and burdens, committed relationships, family, de-centralized corporate worship, community of continuous interaction, church as a way of life, church as rhythm not routine, church as missional, smaller groups or network of small groups, evangelism as living life in community, mutual accountability and vulnerability, other-centered, and fluid.[84]

This completes an overview of three core values held by the emerging church at large. Yet, having already described the emerging church as offering a plethora of expressions, highly fragmented, and diverse, is it then even possible to ascribe or link each of these traits, or descriptions of each trait, to all emerging churches? Is it probable that some identify with the emerging church movement, yet differ in great distinction from parts of the assessment given thus far, maybe even embracing similar categories yet choosing to re-write definitions?

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[81] Ibid., 92–114. ABC Television produces a show called *America's Extreme Home Makeover* where a team of star builders come in and completely demolish an old house and build a new one for a needy family. Ty Pennington is the lead builder/star of the show. Interestingly enough, sometimes they demolish what seem to be viable structures—choosing to build from the ground up versus constructing something new upon existing foundations or in corroboration with the old.

[82] Ibid., 94.

[83] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 21.

[84] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 92–114. The values and practices shared at Solomon's porch for spiritual formation through community include: corporate worship, physicality, dialogue, hospitality, belief, creativity, and service. Through these community values, Pagitt hopes to see believers live lives in harmony with God, which is a weakness of the present day educational approach (tests, catechisms, and statements of faith) to spiritual formation. See Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 23. Rick McKinley's work, *This Beautiful Mess*, also provides an insight to an emerging church that practices some of these ways.

Highlighting conflicting views or convictions held by two pioneer leaders of the emerging church—Pagitt of Solomon's Porch in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Driscoll of Mars Hill Church, in Seattle, Washington—might well be the best way to answer this question. Both men, considered prominent emerging church leaders, provided theological positions on the trinity, atonement, and Scripture as part of a collaborative writing effort with Zondervan Publishers.[85] In this work, titled *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, the distinct differences between these two leaders became apparent—if not already known. Pagitt's reflection on Driscoll's chapter offers the following assessment: "We see the Bible differently and the role of Christianity in the world differently."[86] He goes on to say that, "we are essentially telling different stories of Christianity."[87] Driscoll's assessment of Pagitt's chapter would affirm this disparity. He charges Pagitt with embracing the tenets of evolution, denying the human sin nature, a weakened or absent message of the cross, an over-realized eschatology, and mistaken view of change as progress, all stemming from a basic refusal "to not deal with the truth claims of Scripture."[88]

Although further analysis of these two emerging church leaders will come later in this work, the implications of such exchanges reveal a great chasm. In addition, although this example primarily highlights their differences in orthodoxy, it also implicates a disparity between their orthopraxy that seems to place these leaders in different boats, heading down different streams, and rowing for different teams.[89] Nevertheless, the answer at this juncture of the movement, despite the relational tension just mentioned, as to whether two emerging churches and their leaders could live within the same tent of emerging Christianity yet hold

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[85] Karen Ward et al., *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches,* ed. Robert Webber (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). This work presented the theological perspectives of five emerging church leaders. The editor, Robert Webber, served as the Myers Professor of Ministry at Northern Seminary.

[86] Doug Pagitt, "Response to Mark Driscoll," *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches,* ed. Robert Webber (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 42.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Mark Driscoll, "Response to Doug Pagitt," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches,* ed. Robert Webber (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 145–46.

[89] At the National Conversation on the Emerging Church, Driscoll stated to Pagitt that he "could not join Mars Hill." This statement came after Pagitt affirmed that a Christian could openly practice homosexuality at Solomon's Porch. See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church," Panel Speakers: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Doug Pagitt, and Karen Ward, *Personal notes*, n.p., June 1–2, 2007, Seattle, Washington.

polar positions, is yes—but with glaring difficulties and opposing distinctives.[90] So if diverse streams within the emerging church exist, as evidenced with Driscoll and Pagitt, how then are these streams defined and what traits unify them at least to the point of being classified as a part of the same movement?

Types and Streams

Categories, camps, labels, and lists are generally not welcome guests inside the emerging church movement.[91] Such conviction is captured by Pagitt's humor when he refers to his list of emerging church practices for *Relevantmagazine.com* as a "1980's technique [that] could result in the revocation of my emerging church decoder ring."[92] McKinley warns of the danger of categorizing emerging churches and leaders on a number of fronts. First, "We don't know what exactly the emerging church will become." Second, categories are simply "not that cut and dry." Third, "There are no teams yet." Fourth, Americans "quickly categorize people so they can either turn them into a celebrity or a demon." Lastly, categories have the potential to squelch the fragile emerging church movement "if a safe context for it to grow" is not provided, or the movement will be "high jacked by the more mature plants and therefore will not really be a fresh move of God at all."[93]

Despite these warnings, remarks still emerge from writings that provide useful categorical analyses that aid in helping to discern what is happening within the emerging church. This work will now examine some influential voices within and outside the emerging church that have joined in this emerging categorical discussion to help provide clarity, accuracy, and understanding about the movement. Each of these voices has identified what they consider

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[90] At the National Conversation on the Emerging Church, when the question was asked whether Driscoll should be considered a part of the emerging church, Pagitt jumped in the conversation with a resounding yes. See Zondervan, "Conversation on the Emerging Church." Pagitt welcomes Driscoll's voice in the conversation, despite their distinct differences that Driscoll wants to highlight and Pagitt wants to lay aside, and despite Driscoll disassociating with many of its leaders. Driscoll's chapter in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches* reveals his interest in keeping a voice within the movement, while simultaneously distancing himself from many of its leaders.

[91] Jason Clark, an emerging church leader from the United Kingdom, stated his dislike for labels when asked to submit (personal e-mail correspondence, 2007) his opinion about who were some key emerging church leaders based on Ed Stetzer's categorizing of the movement (see next page). Clark's emerging church web site can be found online: www.jason@jasonclark.ws.

[92] Pagitt, "Unraveling Emergent."

[93] Rick McKinley, "My Thoughts on the Emerging Church."

various "types" or "streams" represented within the emerging church.

Missiologist Ed Stetzer classifies three types of emerging churches.[94] Relevants (a coined phrased by Stetzer) is the first type. These emerging churches are seeking to communicate orthodox views of the Bible and worship yet do so "in a more culturally relevant way." Intentionality in reaching their culture describes a core value for Relevants as they seek to contextualize a Bible-centered Gospel in a way the emerging culture can understand.[95]

The second type is the Reconstructionists. These emerging churches desire a deconstructing of the present forms of church due to their irrelevance and ineffectiveness of reaching those outside the church. An orthodox view of the Gospel and Scripture is generally held while new experimentation of forms of church are implemented such as incarnation or house models.[96]

Revisionists are the final type offered by Stetzer. This group, like the other two, leads from a strong *pathos* to reach the emerging postmodern culture, yet differs considerably in content. Orthodox evangelical teaching on subjects such as substitutionary atonement, hell, gender, and the nature of the gospel are held loosely, questioned deeply, and remains open to revision. Their descriptions and thought- provoking questions about culture and Christianity provide useful insight, but their prescriptions lack alignment with mainstream evangelical doctrine, which adheres to the full counsel of God's Word. Stetzer, out of these three types of emerging churches, encourages collaborating most closely with the Relevants. Reconstructionists should welcome dialogue about biblical ecclesiology, while Revisionists, who seem to be leaning toward a dangerous "abandonment of the teachings of scripture about church, theology, and practice," should receive stern warning from a prophetic voice.[97]

Driscoll identifies a fourth type or stream called Relevant Reformed. Driscoll, drawing from Stetzer's categorizing, embraces

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[94] Driscoll refers to Stetzer as the "best missional thinker in North America." See Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman, 2006), book cover. Cf. Liederbach and Reid, *Convergent Church*, 99–102, for their use of Stetzer's emerging church categories.

[95] Ed Stetzer, "Understanding the emerging church," *Baptist Press*, n.p [cited 10 April 2007]. Online: http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?Id=22406.

[96] Ibid. House churches sometimes referred to as incarnational (missional in the way of Jesus) churches, reject much of the structure and organization seen in traditional churches.

[97] Ibid.

the Relevant label—churches that thrive on engaging the postmodern culture with the unchanging message of Jesus Christ—yet adds to this category his own reformed theological convictions.[98] Another name or description for this stream, which makes the theological bent obvious, is the "confessional, contextual, cool Calvinists."[99] Collin Hansen, writing for *Christianity Today*, highlights the present phenomenon of this "significant Reformed uptick" among the younger generation, of which Driscoll claims, "That's my team."[100] He goes so far to say that this new reformed movement "may be larger and more pervasive" than the Emergent conversation that receives such coverage from the press as capturing the attention of the young.[101]

This mention of the Emergent conversation brings forth yet another category within the emerging church that needs clarifying. Are emerging and emergent, when referring to this movement, the same thing? No! Scot McKnight provides a clear distinction between the two.[102] McKnight defines emerging as representing the "wider, informal, global, ecclesial (church-centered) focus of the movement." It is a term that encompasses in one word the "global reshaping of how to 'do church' in postmodern culture." He concludes his emerging description adding, "It has no central offices, and it is as varied as evangelicalism itself."[103]

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[98] Driscoll presented this category of the emerging church, his perspective of the various streams, and which streams key emerging leaders should be identified with at the SEBTS Convergent Conference. See Driscoll, "Convergence Conference Lecture." In this talk, Driscoll referred to McLaren and Pagitt as being a part of the revisionist category, Kimball as a relevant, and himself as a relevant reformed.

[99] Highlights of the Convergence conference mentioned in footnote 88 along with this quote from Mark Driscoll can be found at Tammi Ledbetter, "Frank exchanges aired at conference," *Baptist Press*, n.p. [cited 26 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=26496.

[100] Collin Hansen, "Young, Restless, Reformed: Calvinism is making a comeback—and shaking up the church," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 22 Sept. 2006]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday .com/ct/article_print.html?id=38821. For Driscoll's quote see Ledbetter, "Frank exchanges."

[101] Ibid.

[102] McKnight refers to himself as a theologian that has "studied the movement and interacted with its key leaders for years. . . ." See Scot McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=40534. In this article, McKnight identifies Kimball as the "one centrist expression of the emerging movement in the U.S."

[103] Ibid. McKinley emphasizes the diversity within the movement by answering, "the same things as the Baptists believe about it," when asked about what the emerging church believes. He says people respond by scratching their heads and then ask, "Which Baptist?" To which he replies, "exactly." See McKinley, "My Thoughts on the Emerging Church."

In contrast, Emergent represents an official organization located in both the U.S. and the U.K called Emergent Village. It defines itself as "a growing, generative friendship among missional Christians seeking to love our world in the Spirit of Jesus Christ."[104] Disillusionment and disenfranchisement with "conventional ecclesial institutions of the late 20th century" provided the founding cohorts, in the late 1990s, the collaborative unity needed to launch Emergent Village. Emergent Village, growing with and alongside the emerging church, states that its aim is to "fund theological imaginations and spiritual lives of all who consider themselves a part of this broader movement."[105] McKnight's final distinction between emerging and emergent warns of not mistaking "all of emerging to the Emergent Village"—the "intellectual and philosophical network of the emerging movement"—at least for some.[106]

In like fashion with Stetzer, McKnight also identified types, or what he refers to as streams, five in all.[107] He believes that each of these streams ultimately flows into the same emerging lake, which collectively characterizes and captures the essence of the emerging church. Prophetic rhetoric—voices that are edgy, deliberately provocative, and use overstatement for impact—is the first stream. The second is postmodern. The emerging church must choose its engagement as either ministering to, with, or as postmoderns. McKnight holds that most emerging Christians fall in the "to" or "with" category and can be described as not denying truth or denying that Jesus and the Bible is truth. Third, and what most identifies the emerging church, according to McKnight, is praxis-oriented. Emerging praxis emphasizes how to live out faith from a newly prescribed view of ecclesiology, which can be identified in its worship, concern for orthopraxy and its foremost concern with being missional—participating with God in redeeming this world through community involvement.[108]

The fourth stream is post-evangelical. The emerging church operates with a protest element that wants to see reform in how the

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[104] See Emergent Village, "About Us," *Emergent Village Web Site*, n.p. [cited 11 Oct. 2007]. Online: http//www.emergentvillage.com.

[105] Ibid.

[106] McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church."

[107] Ibid. The following discussion on five streams within the emerging church comes from this same article.

[108] Ibid.

church functions. This includes openness to theological inquiry and challenges with evangelical claims of exclusivity. A trademark of the emerging church movement, says McKnight, "Is that we believe all theology will remain a conversation about the truth who is God in Christ through the Spirit, and about God's story of redemption at work in the church." McKnight, having acknowledged the weakness of the who is in and who is out modernistic mentality, takes a stand for the exclusivity of Jesus Christ or else, "There is no Christianity, emerging or evangelical." Political captures the name of the fifth and final stream. The emerging church does not engage in politics as usual. Democrats lead the emerging church poles due to their "historic commitment to the poor and to centralizing government for social justice." Balance is sought in maintaining biblical fidelity to both social initiatives and the call to personal salvation.[109]

Recapping the types, streams, and friendships reveals a plethora of emerging church options—relevants, reconstructionists, revisionists, reformed relevants, emergents, prophetic, postmodern, praxis-oriented, post-evangelical, and political—all living under the same church roof. So what is it that holds such an assortment together realizing the potential and real existence of antithetical views among some emerging churches and leaders? The unifying trait, one that emerges routinely throughout all emerging church discussions, is the emphasis on being missional to a postmodern culture. As Driscoll argues, no matter how you define it—postmodern or not—the world has changed and therefore we must find new ways of reaching people.[110] Although different streams might hold opposing views on the method and message associated with being missional; this is the quintessential unifying factor.[111] How this fleshes out in the preaching ministry of a select representation of emerging church pastors will become the next order of discussion in chapter three.

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture."

[111] Traversing back to the Pagitt-Driscoll discussion, even these two polar emerging leaders find agreement in that the central aim of their leadership entails answering the question of how best to express Christianity in a postmodern culture. See Zondervan, "Conversation on the Emerging Church." Tim Conder's description of the emerging church movement captures the essence of this unifying factor. He writes, "The emerging church seeks to be an authentic contextualization of the gospel within the values and characteristics of postmodern culture." See Conder, *The Church in Transition*, 25.

Profile Summary

This chapter began by highlighting the unique challenge of profiling such a young, diverse, amorphous, and ever-evolving movement. Yet, despite the difficulty of this task, a number of insights have emerged. The emerging church morphed out of Generation X ministry, which served as a transitional catalyst to discovering that an entire cultural shift was taking place—a completely new lens through which to see, understand, and live life in the twenty-first century. Those experiencing life within this new cultural paradigm have become known as postmoderns. Postmodernism by nature emphasizes a deconstructive spirit that disassembles the modern approach to life while searching, imagining, and creating the existence of a new culture absent of modernistic tenets.

The church's awareness of postmodernity helped expose, bring to the forefront, and/or uncover an unmet need—how to reach postmoderns with the Christian message and live the Christian faith to and within a postmodern culture. Changes in ministry beliefs (orthodoxy) and practices (orthopraxy) ensued in order to adapt to this new culture; thus, emerging into what is now known as the emerging church. Although variations of the emerging church are plentiful, there exist basic trends that help identify those within the movement. Identifying with the incarnational life of Christ, seeing all areas of life as sacred, and refusing to live in isolation, but rather as one with many in community, are three such convictional staples of the emerging church.

This concludes the emerging church profile. Hopefully these insights will serve as a useful backdrop to the study that follows, which will reflect a narrowing of the discussion on the movement in general, to specific observations and interactions about preaching within the emerging church. With the movement quickly becoming vast and diverse, it will be necessary to confine this investigation to a handful of its most influential, colorful, and often times controversial teachers. An analysis and critique of their preaching ministries will now become the primary focus of the remainder of this work.

CHAPTER 3
EMERGING CHURCH PREACHERS: AMBIGUOUS, PROGRESSIONAL, WINSOME, AND PROVOCATIVE

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an informative introduction about each of the chosen emerging church preachers who represent a significant slice or sample of the type of homiletical discourse taking place within the movement. While such a selection could be arduous based on the size, diversity, and expansion of the emerging church, it is in some respects a straightforward choice when narrowing the search to a select criteria. The preachers for this work have been selected on the basis of their formative role during the early stages of the movement,[112] their published writings including web sites and blogs,[113] their identified significance by those within and outside the conversation,[114] their representation of different

[112] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 27–46. In this chapter Gibbs and Bolger discuss the beginnings of the emerging church highlighting each of the four leaders chosen for this work (although they do not identify Driscoll as part of the emerging church). Driscoll however does identify himself as a contributor to the beginning stages of the movement and maintains a place in the broader scope of the emerging church but has distanced himself from certain streams or theological positions held by some. See Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 21, and Mark Driscoll, T*he Radical Reformission: Reaching Out Without Selling Out* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 15–17.

[113] Between the four chosen preachers they have published 30 books within the present decade with many more releases forthcoming. For a listing of their published writings see the following web sites: www.dankimball.com, www.brianmclaren.net, www.dougpagitt.com, and for Driscoll see www.theresurgence.com, and/or www.marshillchurch.org.

[114] Scot McKnight included the names of Pagitt, McLaren, and Kimball when asked who would be the top five emerging church leaders that would represent a balanced cross section of the preaching within the movement (personal e-mail correspondence on 5/01/07). Robert Webber, along with Zondervan publishers, highlighted Pagitt, Kimball, and Driscoll as the "movement's prominent leaders. . . ." See Robert Webber, ed., *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), back cover. Critiques of the movement most often reference these four chosen leaders both in a positive and negative light. Cf. Richard Mayhue, ed., *TMSJ* 17/2 (2006) and Michael Patton, "Would the Real Emerger Please Stand Up?" *Parchment and Pen Blog*, n.p. [cited 20 Aug. 2008]. Online: www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2008/08/will-the-real-emerger-please-stand-up/.

streams within the movement,[115] and their continued public influence evidenced by national and regional speaking engagements at various conferences and seminars. Based on the above criteria, the following four emerging church preachers have been chosen: Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll.

Brian McLaren: Ambiguous

"Papa Bear of emergent" may be one way to describe McLaren but it would be a disservice to imply from this title an aging, less productive, behind the scenes—bless and approve the work of the younger twenty to thirty-something preacher's—type of leader.[116] McLaren's pace and production of ministry, rather than slowing down, matches or exceeds his younger emerging/emergent protégés. This has created for McLaren, according to some, a soaring influence among evangelical pastors and postmodern seekers.[117]

Phyllis Tickle, a best selling author, friend of Emergent Village, and founding editor of the religion department at *Publishers Weekly*, refers to McLaren's influence as having historic proportions.[118] A participant at a Society of Biblical Literature conference quotes her as saying that "Brian McLaren is to the new reformation what Martin Luther was to the Protestant Reformation."[119] Solidifying her view in print, she writes, "In the same way that Martin Luther became the symbolic leader and spokesman for the Great Reformation, so too has Brian McLaren become the symbolic leader and spokesman for the Great

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[115] See section "Types and Streams" in chapter 2 of this work.

[116] "Papa Bear of Emergent" was a title given to Brian McLaren by a reviewer of one of his books at Amazon.com. McLaren has been referred to by others as the father figure of the movement because of his age. Justin Taylor refers to McLaren as its Pastor. See Justin Taylor, "An Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism and the Rest of This Book," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (eds. Millard J. Erickson, Paul K Helseth, and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 18.

[117] Berit Kjos, "Emerging Christianity-Part One" *Crossroad Web Site*, n.p. [cited 30 Aug. 2007]. Online: http://crossroad.to/articles2/006/emerging.htm.

[118] For biographical information on Tickle go to http://www.phyllistickle.com/aboutauthor.html. Tickle is often quoted as an expert in the area of religion by sources such as *USA Today*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *NY Times*.

[119] Adam Walker Cleaveland, "SBL/AAR Day 2/3 & What Is Emergent?" *Pomomusings Blog*, n.p. [cited 18, 2008]. Online: http://pomomusings.com/2006/11/20/sblaar-day-23-what-is-emergent/.

Emergence."[120] Thus, for Tickle, McLaren plays a monumental role in what she believes is a "monumental phenomenon" within Christianity today. [121]

Other accolades that speak to McLaren's influence come from sources like *Time Magazine* who named him "one of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America."[122] *Christianity Today* writer, Andy Crouch, labeled McLaren as "the de facto spiritual leader of the emerging church."[123] Additionally, prominent evangelical voices such as John MacArthur and Al Mohler, who are critical of McLaren's views, see him as the "most influential thinker" and "most prominent" voice, at least within the emergent stream.[124] Therefore, McLaren, having emerged as a key figure in the emerging church movement, becomes a prime candidate for inclusion in this homiletical work.

How has McLaren established himself as a prominent leader? As discussed in the emerging church profile, McLaren has played an integral role in the development of the movement since its early conception having been a part of the original Leadership Network's Young Leader Network (YLN). Upon the dismantling of this group, he founded and launched Emergent Village, which has grown immensely in its influence within select Christian circles. When McLaren initially joined the younger cohorts of YLN—as the "old guy" who had been grandfathered in—he was pastoring Cedar Ridge Community Church, an innovative, nondenominational church in Baltimore-Washington area, which he helped form in

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[120] Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 164.

[121] Ibid., 13. Tickle believes that about "every 500 years" the church has gone through a significant revolution or reformation. Referring to the emerging church movement she states, "The empowered structures of institutionalized Christianity, whatever they may be, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered so that renewal and growth may occur. Now is such a time." See Steve Knight, "Phyllis Tickle to Write Book for Baker Books/Emersion," *Emergent Village Web blog*, n.p. [cited 18 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://www.emergentvillage.com/weblog/phyllis-tickle-to-write-book-for-baker-booksemersion.

[122] Time Magazine, "Cover Story," *Time Magazine Web Site*, n.p. [cited 18 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101050207/photoessay.

[123] Andy Crouch, "The Emerging Mystique," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 13 Oct. 2006]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/011/12.36.html.

[124] See John MacArthur, "Perspicuity of Scripture: The Emergent Approach," *TMSJ* 17/2 (2006): 143, and Albert Mohler, "What Should We Think of the Emerging Church? Part One" *Al Mohler's Web blog*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2006]. Online: http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2005-06-29.

1982.[125] From 1986 until 2006 McLaren, having left a college English teaching position, served as the church's founding pastor.[126]

As pastor of Cedar Ridge, McLaren began to question how the church could adapt to the changing culture—postmodernism—in light of its inability to reach this new generation through modern mindset and methods. His theological wrestling led him to a point of crisis where he faced the options of practicing a modernistic Christianity of which he had great reservations, leaving the ministry and possibly the Christian faith, or going with option three, which meant learning "to be a Christian in a new way."[127] Obviously, McLaren chose option three, thus launching him into a new way of thinking about church, Christianity, and the kingdom of God.[128]

McLaren's first book, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*, according to his website, became the "primary portal into the current conversation about postmodern ministry."[129] However, it was McLaren's later work, *A New Kind of Christian*, which dealt with essential evangelical issues from a postmodern perspective, in a fictional format, that created the wave of influence for him, and the movement at large, leading both into the evangelical/religious cultural spotlight.[130]

McLaren, in the prime of publishing success, because of these earlier writings, swiftly rose to lead voice and key representative of the emerging church. Appearances on diverse broadcasts quickly ensued such as *Larry King Live*, *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, and *Nightline*. McLaren's popularity also lent itself to a networking role on behalf of the emerging church movement, which included mentoring church planters and pastors.[131]

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[125] See chapter 2, footnote 18.

[126] See Brian McLaren, "About Brian," *Brian McLaren Web Site*, n.p. [cited 11 Sept. 2008]. Online: http://www.brianmclaren.net, for a full biographical sketch of McLaren. See Cedar Ridge Community Church online: www.CRCC.org.

[127] Brian McLaren, *A New Kind Of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), ix.

[128] This new way for McLaren is what he calls "emergent thinking," which describes an integral or integrative way of thinking in contrast to that which is purely discursive, polemical, or analytical. He likens it to embracing "what has come before—like a new ring on a tree—something bigger." See Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 278.

[129] See McLaren, "About Brian."

[130] James K.A. Smith, "The Emerging Church," *Reformed Worship*, 77 (Sept. 2005): 41. Tony Jones, national coordinator of Emergent Village, highlights this particular book's profound influence in having "vaulted" McLaren "into the leadership of American Christianity. . . ." having sold well over one hundred thousand copies. See Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 50.

[131] See McLaren, "About Brian."

McLaren, in addition to his preaching load at Cedar Ridge (until 2006), has become a sought out conference speaker and guest lecturer both nationally and internationally. In 2008, he was engaged in an eleven city speaking tour titled, "Everything Must Change," which also revealed the name of one of his latest publications.[132] Although McLaren confesses to often writing with purposeful ambiguity, based on his growing popularity, proliferation of published works, and emergent speaking engagements, it is obvious that some people are embracing, if not comprehending, what he is trying to purvey about the church, the gospel, and the kingdom of God.[133] One example comes from a first hand account of a participant at the Charlotte "Everything Must Change Tour," which might sum up the importance of including McLaren in this work. Unsolicited, as part of the scheduled conference participants' dialogue, a local Charlotte pastor stated that since the reading of McLaren's books, "I am seeing things in Scripture that I never saw before; it has changed my entire way of preaching."[134] If a pastor's view of Scripture is being enlightened to a new way understanding, with the result being a new way of preaching, all stemming from the teachings of McLaren, then his homiletical influence deserves and warrants a closer examination.

Doug Pagitt: Progressional

Pagitt played an integral role during the embryonic stages of the emerging church—with some having credited him with coining the term itself.[135] In the mid-1990s, challenged by the future he saw, or lack thereof, in the type of Christianity he was living, he departed from a vibrant mega church youth pastor position, in Minneapolis, and joined the team of Leadership Network.[136] Pagitt's employed

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[132] Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007). See Deep Shift, "About the Tour," *Deep Shift Web Site*, n.p. [cited 9 Sept. 2008]. Online: http://www.deepshift.org/site/, for information about the *Everything Must Change Tour*.

[133] McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 23.

[134] See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour," *Personal notes*, n.p. Feb. 1-2, 2008, Charlotte, North Carolina. This statement was received personally as a participant of the dialogue session at the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour*.

[135] Wikipedia reports that "Brian McLaren told author Robert Lanham that Pagitt coined the Emerging Church at a leadership retreat in the late 1990"s." See Wikipedia, "Doug Pagitt," n.p. [cited 22 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug_Pagitt.

[136] Christian Book Distributors, "Interview with Doug Pagitt," *Christian Book Web Site*, n.p. [cited 24 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://www.christianbook

responsibility with Leadership Network included building a team for the Young Leadership Network (YLN), which hosted events and created networking opportunities among innovative church leaders.[137] Many of these YLN leaders have sense become foundational names within the emerging church: such as, McLaren, Driscoll, Kimball, Seay, Jones, and Andrew Jones.

In the year 2000, Pagitt shifted his focus to planting a new faith community in St. Paul, Minneapolis, called Solomon's Porch, which refers to itself as "A holistic, missional, Christian community."[138] Here Pagitt has taken the freedom to create a Christian community that seeks to discover "the things that will make our lives good, right and beautiful" and enable them to "stay Christian in the world."[139] Pagitt and the community participants, drawing from what they have sensed worked for them in the past, seek to incorporate those stories with the story they are seeking to live now and into the future.[140]

Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith provides a written account of this vision for the church. Pagitt's writing offers a look inside the life and community of Solomon's Porch as they seek to practice, re-imagine, and live out a "new approach" to Christianity "for a new age."[141] Emerging practices for spiritual formation such as physicality, hospitality, creativity, dialogue, and worship are implemented from a philosophical bent of seeking to "move beyond belief-based faith to life-lived, holistic faith. . . ."[142] This approach to spiritual formation rejects the traditional "educational-based model" seeing it as a

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.com/Christian/Books/cms_content/177247994?page=811781&e. Pagitt served as a youth pastor at Wooddale Church in Minneapolis under senior pastor Leith Anderson prior to his employment by Leadership Network. Pagitt states, referring to his employment at Wooddale, "I had good experiences in that form, people appreciated my preaching and I oversaw a thriving youth ministry, but I had a growing sense that the kind of Christianity that I was living into was not personally sustaining for me."

[137] Ibid.

[138] Solomon's Porch, "About Us," *Solomon's Porch Web Site*, n.p. [cited 15 Oct. 2007]. Online: www.solomonsporch.com. Holistic means that all "areas of life are connected." Missional means that the church is to be sent "into the world to serve God and our neighbors, so that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven." Christian mean "learning to live life with God in the way of Jesus," by way of a "generous orthodoxy, rooted in Scriptures and consistent with the ancient creeds of the church. And community means "desiring to share life with one another in a way that we become a living, breathing, local expression of the global, historical body of Christ."

[139] Christian Book Distributors, "Interview with Doug Pagitt."

[140] Ibid.

[141] Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 17.

[142] Ibid., 23.

limited approach that has created a "bifurcated version of the gospel message, one that reduces the call to Kingdom life to simple belief about Jesus. . . ."[143] In contrast, the holistic approach to spiritual formation rejects the dualistic language and thought that separates the spiritual life with the rest of a person. No dichotomy or distinction is made between the two with the focus being a "harmony with God in all areas of life," while seeking "to live in the way of Jesus in every relationship, every situation, every moment."[144]

Pagitt, in addition to *Church Re-Imagined*, has published five other emerging church works making him "arguably one of the three most prolific authors in the emerging conversation."[145] Most pertinent to this work is his published release of *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*.[146] Here he advocates a radical change to conventional preaching by introducing an alternative called "progressional dialogue."[147] This deconstructed then reconstructed form of preaching emphasizes the role of the congregation in the sermonic event "where the content of the presentation is established in the context of a healthy relationship between the presenter and the listeners, and substantive changes in the content are then created as a result of this relationship."[148] This intentional interchange of multiple viewpoints, which seems to favor the Christian community as the locus of authority for preaching, represents a hallmark trait of Pagitt's homiletical position.[149] Prior to this release there existed no

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[143] Ibid., 31.

[144] Ibid., 19–21.

[145] Phil Johnson, "Different Gospels" *PyroManiacs Weblog*, n.p. [cited 22 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://www.teampyro.blogspot.com/2007/09/different-gospels.html.

[146] Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

[147] Ibid., 11. Pagitt asserts that conventional preaching "is a tragically broken endeavor" (19). This work received the praise of leading voices within the emerging church movement such as McLaren and Kimball. See Brian McLaren and Dan Kimball, endorsement to *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*, by Doug Pagitt. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005, book cover.

[148] Ibid., 23. For Pagitt the sermon emerges in collaboration with the community. This view also correlates with his view of truth, which Pagitt claims is "progressive, not regressive or zero sum" (137).

[149] Ibid., 138. Pagitt commends, "The beauty of progressional dialogue is that it returns the ownership of the Christian perspective to the body of Christ, the people who truly are the church." Stanley Grenz's works mirrors a similar message. Erickson emphasizes Grenz's placing the locus of theology within the community instead of the "traditional definition of theology as the systematic compilation of the doctrinal teachings of Scripture." See Millard Erickson, "On Flying in Theological Fog," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (eds. Millard J. Erickson, Paul K Helseth, and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 340.

published works from an emerging church leader that dealt with hermeneutics or homiletical theory and practice—only writings addressing what it means to be a missional church, creating holistic worship experiences, and how to build authentic communities of faith in a postmodern context. Being the only emerging church leader to publish a complete work on the subject of preaching makes his inclusion in this work a must.

Pagitt's continued influence upon the emerging church stems beyond his writings.[150] As a founding leader and senior fellow of Emergent Village, he continues to provide theological and practical direction to this stream within the movement.[151] His recent speaking schedule has included engagements at various locals across the nation as part of *The National Conversation on the Emerging Church*, sponsored by Zondervan Books.[152] In 2006 *Preaching* journal hosted Pagitt at its national conference, which provided a premiere platform to espouse his homiletical position to hundreds of pastors around the nation. Additionally, *Preaching* highlighted his homiletical views in a featured published interview.[153]

Pagitt's ministry has also been the recipient of national television exposure. *CNN's Prime News with Erica Hill* made him a guest speaker to share his views on practicing Yoga. *PBS Television* interviewed him as part of an emerging church special with *Religion*

Grenz's work seeks to revision evangelical identity derived from propositional truth given through divine revelation to emphasizing a spirituality-based identity that embraces the role of community or the social voice in theological discourse. He writes, "To be 'evangelical' means to participate in a community characterized by a shared narrative concerning a personal encounter with God told in terms of shared theological categories derived from the Bible." He also believes that theology is "the believing community's reflection on its faith." See Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the Twenty-first Century* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 25, 81, and 85.

[150] Tickle refers to Pagitt as "one of emergent Christianity's most influential leaders and brilliant thinkers." See Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 164.

[151] The aim of Emergent Village is to "fund the theological imaginations and spiritual lives of all who consider themselves a part of this broader movement"—speaking of the emerging church at large. See Emergent Village, "About Emergent Village," *Emergent Village Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2007]. Online: www.emergentvillage.com. Scot McKnight also identifies Emergent Village as "the intellectual and philosophical network of the emerging movement. . . ." See Scot McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 12 Dec. 2007]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday .com/ct/article_print.html?id=40534.

[152] See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church," *Zondervan Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Dec. 2007]. Online: http://zondervan.com/Cultures/en_US/NPC/RegionalEvent/.

[153] Doug Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," interview by Michael Duduit, *Preaching* 21/6 (2006): 34–40.

& Ethics Newsweekly.[154] Therefore, Pagitt's influence, whether it's published books, national speaking engagements, television media exposure, or behind the scenes directional leadership through a significant theological arm of the movement, has been a mainstay since the inception of the emerging church and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Thus, like McLaren, he warrants a closer examination.

Dan Kimball: Winsome

Winsome might just be the best term to describe Kimball, a leading emerging church preacher who fashions his extravagant hair after punk Rockabilly musicians.[155] His winning, charming, and engaging presence has been a part of the movement from its inception. Like Pagitt, some emerging church leaders have credited him with coining the now widely marketed label for the movement—emerging church.[156]

Kimball currently serves as pastor of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California. Vintage Faith launched in 2004 out of a desire to create a new fellowship for the emerging post-Christian culture.[157] Kimball describes his church as seeking to "make sense of what it means to be both a Christian and a church community in the world today."[158] Kimball, prior to founding Vintage Faith, served as a minister at Santa Cruz Bible Church where he led a Gen-X—church within a church—alternative worship service called

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[154] For an unofficial transcript of the *CNN* segment see "John MacArthur, Doug Pagitt, and Yoga," *Pulpit Magazine Web Site*, n.p. [cited 18 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.sfpulpit.com/2007/09/13/john-macarthur-doug-pagitt-and-yoga. For the PBS special see Kim Lawton, "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly," *PBS television*, no.846 (2005), n.p. [cited 20 Aug. 2006]. Online: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week846/interview.html.

[155] Driscoll described Kimball as "winsome" at the National Conversation on the Emerging Church. See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church," *Personal notes*, n.p. June 1-2, 2007, Seattle, Washington. Kimball is an avid fan of Rockabilly, which is "one of the earliest styles of rock and roll music, and emerged in the early – 1950's." In recent years, it has enjoyed a revival of popularity along with its own "enthusiast subculture." See Wikipedia, "Rockabilly," *Wikipedia Web Site*, n.p. [cited 8 March, 2008]. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockabilly.

[156] Driscoll believes Kimball coined the term "emerging church." See Mark Driscoll, "Convergence Conference Lecture," *SEBTS Web Site*, n.p. [cited 4 Nov. 2007]. Online: http://www.sebts.edu/convergent/generalinfo/.

[157] Vintage Faith Church can be found online: www.vintagefaithchurch.org.

[158] See Dan Kimball, "About Me," *My Space Blog*, n.p. [cited 10 Nov. 2007]. Online: www.myspace.com/vintagefaith.

Graceland.[159] Kimball, discovering the limited value in services aimed at retaining young adults in the mother church, corroborated with Santa Cruz Bible Church to found Vintage Faith.[160]

Kimball's rise to prominence within the emerging church birthed out of his founding role with Graceland and his involvement in Gen-X ministry, which quickly shifted to postmodern discourse during the mid to late 1990s.[161] Kimball's public notoriety emerged because of his speaking engagements with the Young Leadership Network and Emergent-YS.[162] In 2003, Kimball published his first book, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. This work introduced Kimball's version of *Vintage Christianity*, which included side bar commentary by the likes of Rick Warren, Howard Hendricks, and Chip Ingram. He describes Vintage Christianity as "a refreshing return to an unapologetically sacred, raw, historical, and Jesus-focused missional ministry."[163] An aim of this book was to provide more than simply a new approach or model for ministry. Rather, Kimball launched a challenge for a new mindset for reaching and engaging the emerging culture—in clear contrast to the seeker sensitive approach for doing church. This novel way of doing church required a fresh appeal that would not frighten innovators from removing "modern-ministry lenses" to engage the emerging postseeker generation, a generation who Kimball believes is "very open spiritually" but "not interested in church."[164] This particular book, along with his follow-up work, *Emerging Worship: Creating New Worship Gatherings for Emerging Generation,* placed Kimball in the spotlight as a mainstream emerging church leader.[165]

The church's interest in Kimball's views about Vintage Christianity has created a road show of speaking engagements at various evangelical conferences and events around the country. In 2007, representing what has been deemed as the "centrist

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[159] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*: *Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), back cover.

[160] Bolger and Gibbs, *Emerging Church*, 32–33.

[161] Ibid. See also Mark Driscoll, "A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church" *Criswell Theological Review* 3/2, (Spring 2006): 87–89.

[162] Ibid. Emergent YS works with Christian youth workers worldwide in hosting seminars, conventions, resources, and internet services. See online: www.emergentys.com.

[163] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, back cover.

[164] Ibid., 14–15, and back cover.

[165] Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating New Worship Gatherings for Emerging Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2004).

expression" of the emerging church, Kimball teamed up with other emerging church leaders such as Pagitt and Driscoll to speak at various locals across the nation as part of The National Conversation on the Emerging Church, sponsored by Zondervan Books. [166] The National Pastors Conference selected Kimball as a conference speaker at its 2007 and 2008 convention.[167] Additionally, The National Outreach Convention presented by *Outreach* magazine hosted him as a keynote general session speaker at its 2007 venue.[168] Kimball's blog site lists numerous speaking engagements scheduled throughout the year.[169] The broad range of Kimball's influence upon the emerging church and evangelical Christianity, through his conference-speaking schedule, speaks for itself.

The renowned status acquired by Kimball within the emerging church network has equally intrigued those outside the movement. One prime example involves *Preaching* journal. *Preaching* headlined Kimball as their feature interview in November of 2004.[170] Furthermore, they included this discussion in their published work, *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights From Twenty Top Pastors*.[171] Editor Michael Duduit noted the selected preachers for this work as being the "outstanding preachers and influencers of preaching" and the "best interviews published in *Preaching* during the past decade."[172] Although Kimball has not written any complete work on homiletical theory or practice, he has engaged the subject with two specific chapters in *The Emerging Church*—not to mention additional homiletical insights observable from his other writings and speaking engagements.[173]

Kimball's future leadership voice within the emerging church and broader scope of evangelicalism appears promising. His

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[166] Scot McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," and Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church."

[167] See Zondervan, "The National Pastors Conference," *Zondervan Web Site*, n.p. [cited 7 July 2008]. Online: http://www.zondervan.com/Cultures/en-US/NPC/NationalConvention/.

[168] See Outreach Magazine, "The National Outreach Convention, November 7–10, 2007," *Outreach Magazine Web Site*, n.p. [cited 8 Jan. 2008]. Online: www.outreach.com.

[169] Dan Kimball, "Some of the Events I Am Part Of," *Dan Kimball Blog*, n.p. [cited 28 Feb. 2008]. Online: www.dankimball.com.

[170] Dan Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball," interview by Michael Duduit, *Preaching*, n.p. [cited 20 March 2007]. Online: http://www.preaching.com/preaching/online/04/November/feature1.htm.

[171] Michael Duduit, ed., *Preaching with Power: Dynamics Insights From Twenty Top Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

[172] Ibid., 9.

[173] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, Chapters 16 and 17.

emerging schedule remains full. In addition to his pastoral role at Vintage Faith, numerous speaking engagements across the country, involvement with Youth Specialties, and pervasive writing schedule, he also serves as an Adjunct Faculty Mentor at George Fox Seminary where he is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree related to emerging church leadership. These combinations of activities solidify Kimball as a prominent voice within the emerging church movement. His influence will undoubtedly continue to resonate with many young leaders who are aggressively rethinking how to do church. The longevity of his persuasion remains to be seen; yet as for now it appears constant, at least into the foreseeable future—thus warranting a closer examination of his convictions about the proclamation of God's Word to a postmodern culture.[174]

Mark Driscoll: Provocative

A sharp tongue, powerful, down-to-earth catechist, stand-up comic, offensive, uncommonly intelligent, articulate, and humorous, are just a few of the descriptions being offered to describe the person and preaching of emerging church pastor Mark Driscoll.[175] Driscoll, known for his YouTube fame as a result of his unprecedented preaching candor, is founder of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington.[176]

Mars Hill began in Driscoll's living room with a handful of college students and a few families.[177] The future mega church launched soon thereafter, in 1996, with approximately 150 people.[178] The church has since become one of the fastest growing, most innovative, and most prolific church planting churches in America.[179] Driscoll, as the lead preaching pastor, is now recognized

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[174] Kimball speaks of young leaders "rethinking of church as a whole" in his interview in *Preaching*. See Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church."

[175] The descriptions mentioned above were drawn from a number of articles and stories covering Driscoll, all of which are referenced throughout the scope of this work.

[176] Go online to www.youtube.com and enter Driscoll's name to view his preaching clips. Driscoll often references, during his sermons, that someone will most likely post his words on You Tube, typically upon stating something controversial, humorous, or edgy.

[177] The size of what Driscoll refers to as a Mormon family. See Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture."

[178] Driscoll, *The Radical Reformission*, 15.

[179] Crossway, "About the Authors," *Vintage Jesus Web Site*, n.p. [cited 22 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.vintagejesus.net/about_the_authors.html. In 2006, *The Church Report* referred to Mars Hill as the twenty-second most influential church in America. See *Church Report Magazine*, "The

as the eighth most influential pastor in America—with his sermons being downloaded a few million times a year.[180] His influence expands beyond the Mars Hill fellowship through the founding of *Acts 29 Network* (www.acts29network.com), a church planting network that has planted over 170 churches, in addition to founding *The Resurgence*, which is a repository of free on-line missional theological resources (www.theresurgence.com).

Driscoll, like McLaren, Pagitt, and Kimball, served as a part of the initial emerging team that helped launch this missional church movement into mainstream evangelicalism. His national teaching and consulting platform came surprisingly early in the life of Mars Hill. He credits this beginning to the delivery of a pastor's conference sermon hosted by Leadership Network. The sermon, *The Flight from God*, drawing from Driscoll's college philosophy studies, emphasized the emerging culture of postmodernism.[181] As a result of this message, the door for national speaking opportunities flew wide open, landing him engagements with media outlets such as National Public Radio, The 700 Club, and *Christianity Today*.[182] Driscoll rode the wave of speaking venues collaborating with other young future emerging church pastors and theoreticians as a part of Leadership Network.[183] He then pulled away from the national speaking spotlight, prior to the dismantling of Leadership Network's Young Leaders team, focusing his efforts on his family and the shepherding and expansion of Mars Hill.[184]

Insider, July 06: 50 Most Influential Churches," *Cronline*, n.p. [cited 5 Aug. 2008]. Online: http://www.thecronline .com/mag_article.php?mid=671&type=year. Cf. John N. Vaughn, "Top 50 Most Influential Churches (2005)," *Cronline*, n.p. [cited 5 June 2008]. Online: http://www.thechurchreport.com/content/view/484/32/. Crossway's biographical sketch on Driscoll also references *Seattle* magazine as naming him "one of the twenty-five most powerful people in Seattle."

[180] Crossway, "About the Authors." Outreach magazine's 2007 church report ranks Mars Hill Church as the sixty-six fasting growing church in the U.S. See Outreach, "2007 Outreach Magazine Report: Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches," *Outreach Magazine 5th Annual Special Issue: America's Largest and Fastest-Growing Churches*, (2007), 56–57.

[181] Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, 97–98.

[182] Driscoll, *Radical Reformission*, 16. Driscoll studied philosophy in college with a Christian professor who did his thesis on "Descartes and modern understandings of truth and knowledge." He thus spent a year reading works that dealt with the "transition from the modern to postmodern world." Chapter 4, footnote 10, provides his extensive reading list. See Driscoll, *Confessions Of A Reformission Rev.*, 97–98.

[183] Ibid. Some of the theoreticians Driscoll refers to include Leonard Sweet, Stan Grenz, Sally Morganthaler, George Hunsberger, and Tom Sine.

[184] Ibid., 17.

The rapid growth of Mars Hill, which now on a given Sunday hosts more than 6,000 people on multiple campuses, has created for Driscoll a platform or outlet of influence among a broad range of evangelicals. This influence has led to multiple publications. Driscoll's first published book, *The Radical Reformission: Reaching out without Selling Out*, offered his "contribution toward the furtherance of the emerging church in the emerging culture."[185] His second work, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, chronicles the story and hard lessons learned as a pastor of Mars Hill.[186]

In the latter work, the direction of Driscoll's theological persuasion within the movement becomes increasingly transparent and sharply defined. Here Driscoll speaks of his departure, separation, and disdain for the theological presuppositions, or lack there of, from some of his initial Young Leaders Network cohorts.[187]

According to Driscoll, the emergent stream of the emerging church movement began to question orthodox positions of the faith relating to penal substitution, homosexuality, sin, hell, and the sovereignty of God, which he could not condone.[188] Because of his antithetical stance to the theological direction of some key founding emerging church leaders, defining himself as part of the young reformed team, some began to question whether Driscoll should be considered a part of the emerging church.[189] *The Seattle Times*, rightly observing that "Mars Hill has become an anomaly," stated that "with its sheer size and orthodox theology—far more conservative than most other emerging churches—it no longer fits neatly into that niche."[190] Yet despite some questioning whether to consider him as still part of the movement, Driscoll himself still retains such

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[185] Ibid.

[186] Driscoll, in addition to the works mentioned thus far, has recently teamed up with Crossway in an agreement to publish a line of books called Re:Lit (Resurgence Literature). Driscoll will be releasing six new books within the series not to mention additional works by various authors. See Mark Driscoll, "Re:Lit," *TheResurgence Web Site*, n.p. [cited 15 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://www.theresurgence .com/md_blog_2007_09_10_re_lit.

[187] Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, 99. Cf. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 48, for Jones's description of the separation. He writes, "Driscoll's increasingly conservative theology and his unrepentant attitude led to an eventual distancing from the rest of the group."

[188] Ibid., 22.

[189] Krista Tippett, panelist facilitator for the Zondervan National Conversation on the Emerging Church, raised this question about Driscoll. Ironically, Pagitt affirmed Driscoll's role inside the movement and welcomed his voice as a part of *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*. See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church."

[190] *The Seattle Times*, quoted by Crossway, "About the Authors."

an alliance—albeit loosely. He does this despite having emphatically separated himself from certain streams within the movement—specifically the Emergent stream, which he identifies as a new liberalism that seeks to accommodate postmodernism.[191] Rather, Driscoll continues to define himself and Mars Hill as an emerging evangelical church that is "missional in practice and evangelical and biblical in theology."[192]

Driscoll's unabashed alignment with reformed theology has not yet closed the door for engagement among other emerging church leaders, while at the same time creating new opportunities among reformed and orthodox evangelical groups. For example, Zondervan welcomed Driscoll's voice in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, which included a national speaking tour. On the reformed side, John Piper hosted Driscoll at his 2006 and 2008 National Desiring God Pastor's Conference.[193] Mars Hill, having the influence, space, and resources, has even begun hosting their own national conferences. The Resurgence sold out all seating for the 2008 Text and Context Conference that featured preachers such as John Piper, C. J. Mahaney, and Matt Chandler.[194] Driscoll has also teamed up with Tim Keller, in New York City, for a conference on church planting.[195]

Driscoll holds an unquestionable influence among the younger emerging generation of Christian laypeople and pastors—evidenced by the thousands flocking to listen to, or glean insights from, his edgy and provocative preaching. And, because he is emerging, yet definitively not emergent, intentionally engaging with the postmodern culture, yet repulsed by perpetual postmodern discussion, a strong advocate and practitioner for deep cultural assimilation, while at the same time strongly bent toward Calvinism and reformed theology, and a visionary church growth leader—

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[191] Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, 21.

[192] Ibid., 23.

[193] The conference audio is available online: www.desiringgod.com.

[194] Video and audio of this conference is available online: www.TheResurgence.com. Attendance at this conference was nearly 1,200 people representing 46 states and 11 countries. Hundreds more watched the conference at Mars Hill Satellite campuses in addition to online viewing via live streaming video. See Scott Thomas, "Seattle Conference and Sunny Days," *Acts 29 Church Planting Network blog*, n.p. [cited 14 March 2008]. Online: www.acts29network.org.

[195] See Acts29Network, "Dwell Conference," *Acts29Network Web Site*, n.p. [cited 14 March 2008]. Online: http://www.acts29network.org/event/2008-04-29-dwell-conference--an-urban-church-plant. The Dwell Conference was an urban church planting conference consisting of both the Acts 29 Network and the Redeemer Church Planting Center.

despite its grating on postmoderns as being arrogant—it makes him difficult to pigeon hole within the emerging church movement and evangelicalism at large.[196] None-the-less, despite his straddling of the fences that divide many evangelicals, including association with the emerging church, he chooses continued affiliation with this loosely connected movement. It is a movement he defines as "glad to see the end of modernity" while "seeking to function as missionaries who bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to emerging and postmodern cultures"—thus making him a necessary candidate for inclusion in this work.[197]

Conclusion

This concludes the introduction to the four chosen emerging church preachers. The range of diversity includes the following: a generous orthodox preacher that dislikes perspicuity; a radical revisionist preacher who desires to re-imagine pulpit ministry; a winsome relevant preacher; and a staunch puritan reformed preacher known for his provocativeness. These preachers provide the unique and selective sample needed in order to represent the type of preaching advocated inside the emerging church. This work will now seek to offer an examination of each preacher's homiletical practice with the aim to provide a comparative analysis and critique of their preaching positions with that of Scripture.

[196] Collin Hansen, "Pastor Provocateur," *Christianity Today* 51/9 (Sept. 2007): 46–47.
[197] Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.*, 22.

PART 2
PREACHING AND THE EMERGING CHURCH: MESSAGE, MENTALITY, AND METHOD

Part two, which covers chapters four through eight, unfolds the specific preaching ministries of the chosen four emerging church leaders. Each leader will have his preaching ministry assessed on the grounds of three primary areas. First, the message category will examine each man's theological position regarding two primary doctrines—Scripture and the gospel. This will provide a basic theological framework by which to guide in the understanding of how each preacher's theology influences his philosophy and methodology of preaching. Second, the mentality assessment looks at their philosophy of preaching. Finally, the method section presents each man's style or form of communicating, which may ultimately provide a reflection of their theology and homiletical philosophy.

CHAPTER 4
BRIAN MCLAREN: GENEROUS PREACHING

Message

Identifying McLaren's message (theology) may prove the most challenging among the selected emerging church preachers. The reason lies with his communication of choice—purposeful provocation and ambiguity.[1] For McLaren, perspicuity is simply not the aim of proclamation, be it oral or writing. In *A Generous Orthodoxy* he comments on his style of writing that inevitably transfers to his preaching theory and practice, "I have gone out of my way to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear, reflecting my belief that clarity is sometimes overrated, and that shock, obscurity, playfulness, and intrigue (carefully articulated) often stimulate more thought than clarity."[2] Yet despite communicating with intentional fuzziness and uncertainty, McLaren no doubt holds theological convictions, albeit loosely, that can be extrapolated from his writings and sermons.[3] His theology or message, in particular

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[1] Pinpointing, with any precision, McLaren's position on doctrine has its challenges for two reasons. First, his beliefs are often communicated through fictional characters that embrace just enough agreement from both sides of a position that the reader is left wondering exactingly where the author stands. He even warns against associating his personal position on a subject with that of the total viewpoint of any one of his characters. These fictional characters, vacillating between agreement and disagreement, present a hallmark trait of his writing style. Second, McLaren seems to strategically place sentences in his writings that enable him to refute any critic that seeks to pinpoint his theological convictions. This method of communicating allows him to own a particular theological position while also maintaining an alliance with the opposing side of the argument. For McLaren, to be for one principle does not mean opposing its opposite. See Greg Gilbert, "Brian McLaren and the Gospel of Here & Now," *IX Marks Blog*, n.p. [cited 22 April. 2008]. Online: http://www.9marks.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID314526, for a helpful and more in-depth discussion of this challenge.

[2] Brian McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 23.

[3] McLaren encourages approaching the Bible with an attitude of *humility* for "humble and curious people understand more than proud and lazy people" and "intellectually flexible people discover more than rigid ones." See Brian McLaren and Tony Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point: How the Culture-Controlled Church Neutered the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 75–76.

Evidence for holding convictions loosely comes from his admitting uncertainty to much of what he speaks and writes about—"If I seem to show too little respect for your opinions or thought, be assured I have equal doubts about my own, and I don't mind if you think I'm wrong. I'm sure I am wrong about many things, although I'm not sure exactly which things I'm wrong about. I'm

concerning his view on the doctrine of the Bible and the gospel, will be the primary focus of this section.

The Bible

What is the Bible to McLaren? Fortunately, his work *Adventures in Missing the Point*, co-authored with Tony Campolo, provides a succinct summary of his view of Scripture that will serve as a useful guide to frame this discussion. In his own words, "I love the Bible."[4] He cherishes it as an "inspired gift from God" seeing it as "a unique collection of literary artifacts that together support the telling of an amazing and essential story."[5] This Bible, with its many intriguing genres, holds 2 Tim 3:16–17 value; if the handler avoids "imposing modern biases" or placing upon it "the modern Western straitjacket" that has "corseted" and "detained" it.[6] Unfortunately, according to McLaren, the imposition of modernity has done just that. Consequently, these modern biases imposed upon the text, if not removed, will lead those of the new global, multiple perspectives and/or postmodern mindset, to needlessly reject the Scripture.[7]

The damaged reputation of the Bible or ways it has been misrepresented stems from what McLaren identifies as four compliments given to Scripture from modern Christians.[8] First, the Bible has been lifted onto a pedestal alongside other valued items. Esteeming Scripture in conjunction with works such as encyclopedias, constitutions, and blueprints has created a false expectation and hope that the Bible is the end all how-to-manual for life. Second, an oversimplified sales pitch of how the Bible is so

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even sure I'm wrong about what I think I'm right about in a least some cases. So wherever you think I'm wrong, you could be right. If, in the process of determining that I'm wrong, you are stimulated to think more deeply and broadly, I hope that I will have somehow served you anyway." See McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 19–20.

Interestingly, McLaren intentionally highlight's his lack of theological training (claiming to have never taken one seminary class for credit) and his entering the ministry through the back door of the English Department. Cf. McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 20–21, 34, 156–57.

[4] McLaren and Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 69. This chapter, "Missing the Point: the Bible," was written by McLaren and will serve as a primary source to frame and summarize his view of the Bible.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 70–72. McLaren seemingly draws from 2 Timothy 3:16–17 when he refers to the Bible as "uniquely profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, and equipping people so they can do good works for God" (70).

[7] Ibid., 72.

[8] Ibid., 70-71. The quotes in this paragraph are all taken from these pages.

easily accessible intellectually has led to "unintentionally sanctioned misunderstandings and bastard readings." Third, the Bible proclaimed as a storehouse of divine propositions and abstractions depleted the storyline of its intrigue and mystery leaving behind sterile doctrines, which are seen "as interesting as grass clippings" to postmoderns. Lastly, mass production of the Bible through technological advances tainted the Scriptures with a "cheap" and "common" reputation influencing most people to believe they can interpret the Bible with supposed validity and authority.

Further evidence highlighting these modern compliments of Scripture, which, according to McLaren, has both "damaged as well as enhanced the Bible's reputation," [9] originally appeared in *A New Kind of Christian.*[10] McLaren's view on the doctrine of the Bible is revealed within the fictional dialogue between the book's two primary characters—Dan and Neo.[11] Questioning the Bible as an answer book is woven throughout their conversation about the authority of Scripture.[12] The Bible as authoritative presents merely a modern conception; 2 Tim 3:16–17 claims inspiration and usefulness, not authority.[13] The Bible, seen through a postmodern-missional lens, presents a different paradigm than the modern version that "wants it to be God's encyclopedia, God's rule book, God's answer book, God's scientific text, God's easy steps instruction book, God's little book of morals for all occasions." Rather, the postmodern approach loosens the grip on the Bible as an answer book and receives something far better in return—a "family story."[14]

Why does McLaren opine insistently that the Bible is not an authoritative answer book? The fallibility of human interpretation provides one distinct reason. Interpretations must always remain open to correction argues McLaren, therefore, "The authoritative

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[9] Ibid., 70.

[10] Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

[11] Dan represents a middle-aged, burned out pastor who is experiencing a crisis of faith, while Neo's character represents a former Presbyterian pastor cum Episcopal layman who helps Dan transition into postmodern Christianity. Essential elements of the evangelical faith are deconstructed in light of postmodernism.

[12] Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, 46–53.

[13] Ibid., 52.

[14] Ibid. McLaren writes, "When we let it go as a modern answer book, we get to rediscover it for what it really is: an ancient book of incredible spiritual value for us, a kind of universal and cosmic history, a book that tells us who we are and what story we find ourselves in so that we know what to do and how to live."

text is never what I say about the text or even what I understand the text to say but rather what God means the text to say. . . ." He continues, "The real authority lies in God, who is there behind the text or beyond the text or above it. . . ." Ultimately, "The authority is not in what I say the text says but in what God says the text says."[15] This interpretive trajectory reveals a polar hermeneutical position when juxtaposed with traditional orthodoxy. Releasing or denying the text (original author) of any authority, the focus shifts to the authority of God, who, rather than speaking authoritatively through the text, moves mysteriously on a different plane (above the authority of the text). This higher level, where God operates and man merely speculates, draws the interpreter to ponder the will and intentions of God and His kingdom—not belabor point for point interpretations that McLaren sees as only reflecting one's personal interpretive grid—typically viewed as superior to others.[16]

Foundationalism presents a final proof or problem with the modern view of Scripture. The Bible, seen as foundational for the Christian life, in *A New Kind of Christian*, is equally diminished or deleted. McLaren identifies three places where Scripture speaks of foundations and then declares, through the character of Neo, "The Bible never calls itself the foundation," implying that the Bible simply cannot be considered the end all rock-solid answer book for life or a Christian world view.[17] Drawing from the sequel to *A New Kind of Christian*, *The Story We find Ourselves In* probably best sums up McLaren's postmodern ideology toward Scripture, "The Bible is more of a question book than answer book; it raises questions that bring people together for conversation about life's most important issues."[18]

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[15] Ibid., 50.

[16] Ibid., 51. On pages 47–49 McLaren presents the foolishness of arguing point for point truths in the Bible due to the weakness and realization that each interpreter sees matters through their own fallible interpretive grid. He writes, "Evangelicals say they're arguing about the Bible's absolute authority, too often they are arguing about the superiority of the traditional grid through which they read and interpret the Bible."

[17] Ibid., 53. McLaren also claims that the Bible never refers to itself as the Word of God. He writes, "'the word of God' is never used in the Bible to refer to the Bible. It couldn't since the Bible as a collection of 66 books hadn't been compiled yet." See McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 163.

[18] Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 82. In the forward to McLaren's work, *Generous Orthodoxy*, John R. Franke presents common characteristics of the postmodern or postconservative response to foundationalism—a nonfoundationalist conception of the Christian faith. These characteristics, represented in this work of McLaren's, are as follows: strong ecumenical interests, a desire to move beyond the liberal/conservative divide, a willingness to think through old questions in new ways that

Returning to *Adventures in Missing the Point*, McLaren, labeling his background as theologically conservative, likens the contemporary problem of interpreting the Bible to putting it through a "colander of Enlightenment modernity." The outcome—"no pulp" and "no substance"—results from the refusal to accept anything except that which could fit through the tiny holes.[19] What remained was the filtered modernistic version of Scripture. As a result, only a few Christians ever truly encounter the Word.

An over-realized hermeneutical fixation with analysis, has, according to McLaren, become the primary problem with the handling of Scripture. Instead of hearing, reading, and interpreting Scripture, analysis reigns and redefines the former three, having become the singular interpretive tool for modern Christians.[20] Breaking the Bible's whole into parts offers obvious value, but this reductionistic approach leaves some insights missing or less certain. McLaren raises the "What have we missed?" and "What have we lost by reduction?" questions by first describing the problem of an overly disproportionate analytical understanding of the Bible. Referencing theological conservatives, he writes,

> We break it down into chapters, paragraphs, verses, sentences, clauses, phrases, words, prefixes, roots, suffixes, jots, and tittles. Now we understand it, we tell ourselves. Now we have conquered the text, captured the meaning, removed all mystery, stuffed it and preserved it for posterity, like a taxidermist with a deer head.[21]

The end goal is nothing more than a sermon and application points for Sunday, accompanied by proofs for apologetic arguments, and/or moral lessons for living.[22] The solution to this modern analytical virus is not a complete debugging of analysis in hermeneutical inquiry, but rather a call for a healthy implementation of holistic questioning.[23] A holistic approach to the interpretive

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foster the pursuit of truth, the unity of the church, and the gracious character of the gospel. See John R. Franke, foreword to *Generous Orthodoxy*, by Brian McLaren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 11.

[19] McLaren and Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 72.

[20] Ibid., 73.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 75.

[23] Ibid. McLaren likens the holistic approach to a "love of landscapes" whereas the analytical approach is like "a miner looking for a hill to strip mine for a quick and saleable product."

process, where the interpreter interacts on a deeper level with the text, will help rid contemporary interpretation of Scripture from inadvertent misrepresentation and lethal analysis.[24]

McLaren's holistic interpretive approach provides many suggestions for reclaiming the Bible for contemporary readers and/or postmoderns over/against the modern (conservative) over-done analytical hermeneutic. Most notably, six proposals stand out that are in some degree distinct from traditional hermeneutics.[25] First, see propositions in the text from a missional vantage point. Instead of settling for a strict doctrinal reading—what you are supposed to believe—look to answer the question of what you are supposed to be doing (*praxis*). What action in the world should be taken to live out the gospel as a result of engaging with the text? Second, welcome an affair with dialogue, conversation, intrigue, and search. This new relationship might just be at the expense of certainty, proof, and argument. For McLaren, clarity is not the necessary goal. He writes,

> The ultimate Bible study or sermon in recent decades yielded clarity. That clarity, unfortunately, was often boring—and probably not that accurate, either, since reality is seldom clear, but usually fuzzy and mysterious; not black-and-white, but in living color. . . . How about a congregation who may not have 'captured the meaning' of the text, but a text that captured the imagination and curiosity of the congregation?[26]

Third, hear the big story of the Bible in addition to seeing yourself within the story and as part of "its ongoing trajectory."[27] Fourth,

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Examples of holistic hermeneutical questions are: "Does this passage explore themes that are explored by other sacred texts from other religions?", "What similarities or differences can be found?", "What were the cultural customs and standards of the day, and how does this story reflect them and perhaps violate them?", "How would it have felt to be each of the characters of the story?", "How does this whole book fit into the whole of the Bible?", and "Where do you see particular biases or literary devices or concerns of that specific time and place?" Examples of analytical questions are: "What do Hebrew or Greek words in these sentence mean?", "What universal principles and accepted doctrines can we associate with this text (or can we use it to 'prove' it)?", and "How does this passage apply to our lives today?" See Ibid., 74.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 75–82.

[26] Ibid., 78. Returning to the trilogy of Dan and Neo, the same message is voiced. In dialogue referring to Neo (ultimately McLaren), the character states, "But for you, the Bible seems to explore mystery, not clarify it." Cf. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 82.

seek and revere mysteries rather than play Sherlock Holmes with the text's meaning. Enjoy and embrace the unknown and inexplicable; reject the modern tendency to always define, analyze, and reduce Scripture from its complexities. Fifth, realize the ecumenical value in the readings of marginalized interpreters. New insights emerge as Scripture is examined from the perspective of those less fortunate and less privileged. And finally, prize questioning the Bible. Allow the text to read you instead of you reading the text.

Out of these aforementioned suggestions for reclaiming the Bible, a noticeable shift takes place from what McLaren refers to as a modern theologically conservative view to a postmodern mindset. A new hermeneutic accompanies this shift to postmodern sensibilities. His interpretive openness and inclusive spirit toward postmodern thinking welcomes a transferring of authority from the text—original intent of the author—to that of the reader or community of faith—as individuals or groups drop certainty and embrace fuzziness, uncertainty, mysteries, and the living and changing color of the text and life.[28] In McLaren's words, framed in discussion about orthodoxy, yet applicable to his view about the Bible, truth, and doctrine, he states, "The achievement of 'right thinking' therefore recedes, happily, farther beyond our grasp the more we pursue it. As it eludes us, we are strangely rewarded: we feel gratitude and love, humility and wonder, reverence and awe, adventure and homecoming."[29] Ultimately dialogue, interacting with others about diverse viewpoints and pursing conversation in journey, while overjoyed at the inability of ever fully arriving at truth, becomes the hermeneutical, biblical, and doctrinal position of choice—a generous reading leading to a generous orthodoxy.

This postmodern bent regarding Scripture explains why McLaren believes some may consider his biblical views as a diversion or departure from orthodox positions of the Christian faith. He writes, "If, for you, orthodox means finally 'getting it right' or 'getting it straight,' mine is a pretty disappointing, curvy

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[27] This ongoing trajectory for McLaren means "that the message itself changes because the message changes its context, which is to say that the message itself changes by addressing new situations and problems and opportunities in new ways." See Brian McLaren, "The Method, the Message, and the Ongoing Story," in Leonard Sweet, ed., *The Church in Emerging Culture*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 210.

[28] Ibid.

[29] McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 296.

orthodoxy."[30] Rather, for McLaren, "Orthodoxy means 'thinking' or 'opinion,'" not a set of indisputable doctrines.[31] Doctrine defined as opinion, then, welcomes many interpretations—each seemingly as valid as the next, yet often divergent from traditional understanding. The gospel presents one such position—among many.

The Gospel

What is the gospel to McLaren? Or, better yet, what is it not in light of his reconfiguring the message for the postmodern matrix? Beginning with the latter, McLaren, in winsome narrative fashion, distances himself, all the while claiming continuity with, the irreducible elements of the gospel (1 Cor 15).[32] Neo, the fictitious postmodern character in *A New Kind of Christian*, arguably presents McLaren's evolving position. Neo touts that the gospel couched in a personal salvation message reeks of a modern sales pitch "that reduces the gospel to modern dimensions—laws, steps," and "diagrams. . . ."[33] The good news, rather than being fixated into an air tight formula—"abstract principles, universal concepts," and/or "disembodied absolutes"—should be reincarnated back to its original context, the kingdom of God.[34]

The kingdom of God, as previously identified in the emerging church profile, is the gospel, or at least its central message within the many facets assigned to it.[35] This gospel for McLaren is not a reinvented version but rather an expanded version or, better yet, truer version of the original message. Repositioning, reintroducing, and reframing the gospel as synonymous with the kingdom of God has become McLaren's ministry manifesto and

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[30] Ibid., 293.

[31] Ibid., 293–94.

[32] McLaren has a canny gift, as previously mentioned (footnote 1), at being purposefully vague or intentionally non-intentional about his view on a topic, which allows him to embrace both sides of an argument while seemingly never fully divulging his own position with clarity. See the interaction between Dan and Neo about the gospel in McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, 103–9. Cf. page 83 where Neo captures both the liberal and conservative view of salvation in stating that both are needed—"not only the 'getting of individual butts into heaven' but also 'saving the world.'"

[33] McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, 105–6.

[34] Ibid., 106.

[35] Ibid., 108. In this dialogue Neo seems to patronize Dan by assuring him that they will eventually deal with the other facets of the gospel like justification by grace through faith and the atoning work of Christ. While acknowledging their importance to inclusion in the gospel, his cheeky communication leads the reader to wonder if he really believes they are important.

continuous mantra. His soteriological vision for this kingdom message defines salvation as a rescue from futile living in the here and now, to fruitful living in the here and now—through the embracing of "God's saving love for all creation."[36] Salvation is a summons to actively participate in God's beautiful plan for humanity on earth. It is an inclusive Abrahamic invitation for "all nations, races, classes, and religions to participate in this network of dynamic, interactive relationships with God. . . .!"[37] This gospel, or secret message of Jesus uncovered, unites people on a peaceful journey to bring healing, love, justice, mercy, humility, reconciliation, and hope to the world.[38] For McLaren, "The Kingdom of God, then, is a revolutionary, counter-cultural movement—proclaiming a ceaseless rebellion against the tyrannical trinity of money, sex, and power" and a breaking down of injustices such as racism, nationalism, consumerism, colonialism, and self-destructive ecosystems.[39] An earth bound church, comprised of diverse religions, interactive relationships, and global experiences—seeking to solve the world's social problems, as followers of the way of Jesus—reflects not only McLaren's vision of the gospel, but also his view of ecclesiology and missiology.

Becoming a part of the kingdom of God, or embracing this reframed gospel, results from participation and practice.[40] Through authentic conversation, not conversion or belief in "any doctrine or theory,"[41] people are drawn to "come on in," not that they were ever out, living the messianic way of Jesus as the best choice for life, while not loosing their "unique identity and heritage."[42] This inclusive enticement to be a part of the dream, revolution, mission, party, network, and dance of God in the world today, does not completely dismiss the historical core of the gospel message (faith, grace, justification, cross, atonement, propitiation, forgiveness, gift of salvation, death, burial, and resurrection), but rather, for McLaren, repositions it as "a footnote to a gospel that is much richer, grander, and more alive, a gospel that calls you to become a

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[36] McLaren, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 25.

[37] Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006), 74.

[38] Ibid., 79.

[39] Ibid., 134.

[40] Ibid., 111.

[41] McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*, 108. Here McLaren ranks conversation over conversion and gospel kingdom over gospel doctrine.

[42] McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 147.

disciple and to disciple others, in authentic community, for the good of the world."[43]

Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crisis, and a Revolution of Hope represents McLaren's latest and most advanced vision of this gospel/kingdom of God message.[44] With relentless repetition he defines the gospel as more than, if not rejection of, "Offering us a ticket to heaven after death."[45] Eternal life made possible through the finished work of Jesus on the cross is not the central tenet of the gospel. Rather, the "essential message of Jesus," "the gospel of the kingdom of God," in the postcolonial, postmodern world in which we live, is a message not just "focused on the afterlife," rather its core is "focused on personal, social, and global transformation in this life."[46] Believing in God's will and dreams being fulfilled on earth—"replacing the earth's injustice with harmony"—is the gospel (good news) and it can be fulfilled if enough people catch the vision and join in the conversation.[47] Just how McLaren communicates this gospel vision through his

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[43] McLaren, "The Method, the Message, and the Ongoing Story," 215. Dream, revolution, mission, party, network, and dance represents the kingdom language offered by McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 138–48. A new language for the kingdom, he believes, needs to replace the old, which evokes "partriarchy, chauvinism, imperialism, domination, and a regime without freedom" (139).

[44] When asked to describe the purpose of this book McLaren responded that he is "trying to help people outside the religious sub-culture to hear and understand the good news of Jesus Christ" and to help those "who are feeling a bit 'claustrophobic' and thinking about leaving the faith find a good reason to stay." He went on to state that this good news of Jesus Christ "is about God's work to transform and heal our world." See Brian McLaren in Tiffany Montavon, "Everything Must Change Tour: An Interview with Brian McLaren," *Faith @ Work*, vol. 120, No. 4, (Winter 2007): 4.

[45] Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Nelson, 2007), 3. Other examples of this point woven throughout the book include statements like: "Jesus' message is not actually about escaping this troubled world for heaven's blissful shores, as is popularly assumed" (4), or "We considered how this message of the kingdom—contrary to popular belief—was not focused on how to escape this world and its problems by going to heaven after death" (p.21).

The reason for adding the statement "if not rejection of" is not to say that McLaren definitively rejects eternal salvation (heaven) as part of the gospel. Yet, based on the number (excessive) of times this theme is mentioned, in the first several chapters alone, it does potentially present the appearance that his over-the-top patronizing of this orthodox doctrinal position could lead one to conclude that there would be no loss to simply dismiss it all together.

At the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour*, McLaren stated, "I'm not going to believe the old narratives anymore" referring to the historic, narrow vision of the gospel. The audience broke out in applause when he opined, "We are not talking about watering down the gospel; we are saying it already got watered down." See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour," *Personal notes*, n.p. Feb. 1–2, 2008, Charlotte, North Carolina.

[46] McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, 22.

[47] Ibid., 21, and 6, respectively. McLaren believes that the world's top global problems can be overcome if people begin to see them in light of Jesus' life and message. If people catch this vision of hope, then, "We will face and overcome the global crises that threaten us, and we will sow the seeds of a better future" (6).

preaching philosophy and methodology will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Mentality

Despite McLaren's prolific publishing pace of emerging church works, he has not yet taken the opportunity to produce any works in the area of preaching. However, homiletical insights are scattered throughout his plethora of books that will suffice in identifying his basic preaching characteristics, trends, and beliefs. One useful resource is a published interview with McLaren by *Preaching* journal titled "Preaching to Postmoderns."[48] This particular homiletical conversation reveals essential elements of McLaren's preaching philosophy and thus will serve as a useful outline for this section. Additional McLaren writings that provide homiletical insight will be used in a supporting or complementary role.

So what does this homiletical outline consist of? Eight specific components emerge from the aforementioned article—postmodernism, mystery, posture, poetry, conversation, experience, community, and the arts.[49] Collectively each of these parts help establish an understanding of McLaren's preaching philosophy; therefore, examination of each component will follow—albeit with needed brevity.

It is appropriate, out of the eight components, to situate postmodernism in the prominent *prima* position. This purposeful placement of postmodernism at the head of the homiletical listing reveals the subordinate relationship of the other parts to this central theme or philosophical ideology.[50] McLaren believes the shift or transition from modernism to postmodernism is presently happening, or has happened, and thus radical change is needed in order to effectively live, love, and preach in today's world.[51] With excited intentionality he calls pastors of this new era to eagerly engage and seize the moment of opportunity to "build the new

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[48] See Michael Duduit, ed., "Preaching to Postmoderns: An Interview with Brian McLaren" in *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights from Twenty Top Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 115–30.

[49] Ibid., 115–30.

[50] For McLaren's most recent writing on the subject of postmodernism see Brian McLaren in Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds., "Church Emerging: Or Why I Still Use the Word Postmodern but with Mixed Feelings," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 142–51.

[51] Ibid., 116.

church."[52] Building this new postmodern church will require a fresh approach to preaching, or rather a "new rhetoric," which can be identified or described by defining the remaining seven components or sub-parts of this discussion.[53]

The second component is mystery.[54] Mystery is allowed to belittle, if not replace, the "What is truth?" question for postmodern preaching—pretentiously leaving it unanswered, at least in part, if not in whole. Instead of preachers proclaiming their messages with confidence and authority, which is an outgrowth of the scientific, analytical, and rational processes of modernity, they should construct their words to have a softer and simpler tone, which comes as a result of serving mystery.[55] "Overblown claims to certainty" and/or "bombproof formulations" squelch mystery and, asserts McLaren, are to be avoided.[56] This does not mean that certainty or absolute truth does not exist, but rather that truth delivered indirectly fares better than truth delivered directly.[57] According to McLaren's mystery mentality, an aim in preaching, having embraced postmodern sensibilities—skepticism, suspicion, and whether or not anyone can possess the ability to confidently know and understand truth—is to "convey a message that is clear yet mysterious, simple yet mysterious," and "substantial yet mysterious."[58] Ultimately, for McLaren, postmodern mystery should reign over the modernistic version of a clear definable understanding of truth; in the end, everything simply cannot be explained, nor should it always be attempted.[59]

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[52] Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 171–2.

[53] Ibid., 87. Chapter 7 presents a postmodern strategy to "Learn a New Rhetoric."

[54] McLaren gives credit to G.K. Chesterton for his mystical mentality. Chesterton's orthodoxy celebrates mysticism as essential to the faith and to one's sanity in contrast to, but not the extinction of, reason. See McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 149.

[55] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 89.

[56] Brian McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns: An Interview with Brian McLaren," interview by Michael Duduit in Michael Duduit, ed., *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights from Twenty Top Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 117, and McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 201.

[57] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 125. McLaren draws from Soren Kierkegaard for this indirect communication philosophy. Its main premise says that if the communicator forces the listener into a position of being wrong while the presenter is correct, then this causes the listeners to loose face. The better approach is when the communicator expresses what he thinks and then gives appropriate space for the listener to decide what they think on their own—between them and God, not the presenter. McLaren sees this as the more gentle and effective way of communicating.

[58] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 89.

[59]McLaren writes, "Consider for a minute what it would mean to get the glory of God finally and fully right in your thinking or to get a fully formed opinion of God's goodness or holiness.

Posture and poetry present homiletical parts three and four. Posture speaks to the humbleness that is needed to connect with postmoderns. McLaren insists that the "know-it-all arrogance of the modern world feels chastened in postmodernism."[60] The preacher, rather than appearing as the modern expert answer-man who dispenses certainty, knowledge, and absolute truth, emerges as a spiritual leader who guides people into mystery.[61] Postmoderns reject pithy proof-text arguments with immovable dividing lines and/or conversation that positions one team against another—us versus them mentality.[62] Instead of proclaiming what to believe, McLaren has learned to show the listener how to believe, through questions, dialogue, showing, and listening, as well as telling and convincing.[63]

Poetry reminds postmodern homileticians of the need to reflect on diction for expression of truth.[64] Their language should model the Bible's, which is mostly poetry and art and was never, according to Mclaren, "intended to be read with the wooden style

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Then I think you'll feel the irony: all these years of pursuing orthodoxy ended up like this- in front of all his glory understanding nothing." See McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 294.

McLaren, through his fictitious character Neo, identifies the need for certainty as a modern problem or phenomenon. Modern Christians are labeled as the ones who "thought the greatest truths were simple and clear, black and white, simple lines, no fuzziness or mystery." The call is for a return to an ancient understanding of truth where people "assumed that more was unknown that was known, and that whatever humans see is just a glimpse into the depth of mystery. . . ." See McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 72.

The new rhetoric for the emerging church or postmodern preachers will include speaking less, as a form of mystic communication. McLaren writes, "The mentor will use words—but only a few. . . . Remaining silent can be the best means by which to convey a message." See McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 90. Cf. McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 155, where he claims theologians can speak through silence—"their silence speaks eloquently of the majesty of God that goes beyond all human articulation."

[60] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 173. At the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour* participants were handed *The Ten Communication Commandments*, which served as a guide for communicating during the conference. Command number one states, "Thou shalt listen actively, ask questions, and refrain from giving advice," and command number six says, "Thou shalt avoid absolutizing." This commanded communication posture for the conference seems to model McLaren's communicative philosophical position. These commandments were part of a participant handout titled, *Deep Shift Owner's Manual*. See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour."

[61] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 117. McLaren also likens proper preaching posture to a lead scout in an expedition. As the leader, the scout acknowledges that he is not the expert having traveled the landscape prior to the journey. Rather, he is "out in front a little bit," helping guide the tour into new territory (118).

[62] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 74–75. McLaren believes people living by the modernistic version of Christianity have often approached unbelievers "not as students or clients but as enemies," which is "not exactly a choice communication strategy." He likens this approach to a doctor who is livid at his patients for needing help.

[63] Ibid., 74, and McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 123. Cf. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 82.

[64] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 130.

of modern textbooks" (encyclopedic textbook genre).[65] Words matter and they are to be carefully crafted taking on the tone of "lovers and artists and less lawyers and salesmen."[66] Poetic preaching, preaching that embraces intuition, imagination, wonder, awe, worship, and wildness, is welcomed in place of prose preaching. Prose homiletics clings to the technical, abstract, systematic, and formulaic—as the better means of conveying God's truths in a postmodern environment.[67] Inundation with scientific rhetoric describes modern preaching; postmodernity awaits and welcomes the return of art in proclamation.[68]

Component five introduces preaching as conversation or dialogue. According to McLaren, listeners value and connect more with preaching when it "mirrors the flow of a conversation."[69] This style of communication represents the philosophical direction of most emerging church or postmodern preaching, which contrasts the typical modern approach of propositional presentations layered with abstract analysis that imposes upon the listener.[70] A collaborative process, where preaching seeks to influence through dialogue, honesty, and humility, rather than by argument or control, represents McLaren's homiletical communication of choice.[71] This conversational approach, states McLaren, never attempts to "be the

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[65] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 77. In *Generous Orthodoxy* McLaren writes: "This mystical/poetic approach takes special pains to remember that the Bible itself contains precious little expository prose. Rather it is story laced with parable, poem interwoven with vision, dream and opera . . . personal letter and public song, all thrown together with an undomesticated and unedited artistic passion." See McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 155.

[66] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 90.

[67] McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 145–7. McLaren supports his position by drawing from Walter Brueggemann, a theologian he views as helping him the most, for this kind of poetic preaching. Poetic preaching offers an alternate or new kind of preaching that differs significantly from the homiletical/theological landscape dominated by theologian-accountants, theologian-technicians, and theologian-scientists.

[68] McLaren's fictional character Neo defines biblical poets as people who "tried to capture the experience and emotion of the people—their laments, hopes, joys, praises, fears, piety, furies, doubts, faith, affections—the whole range of human emotion and experience." See McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 80.

[69] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 119.

[70] Ibid.

[71] The characters Kerry and Neo, in *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, present an example of McLaren's conversational approach to sharing or proclaiming God's story. Kerry comments, after a day of dialogue with Neo, that his giving the title "conversation" to their specific talk really makes sense. The alternative to conversation that she has always experienced would have been control, which is why, she explains, for her resisting the faith. She states, "I just can't buy the idea of a controlling God, with people being like chess pieces or something. The way you tell the story, God really is much more a companion, a conversation partner with the people, guiding them, but not manipulating them, not robbing them of that gift of freedom." See McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 83.

last word, and thus silence other voices," but rather invites continual dialogue in search and hope of discovering truth.[72] The challenge lies in discovering ways to adapt services to incorporate more dialogue with the hope of taking people into deeper discussion.[73]

Experience and community present parts six and seven of this outline. Experience is vital to faith; experience is a goal for McLaren's preaching within the postmodern/emergent context. He aims at getting people into the framework of Jesus, believing that understanding comes from a result of trying and obeying His teachings.[74] It is a combination of understanding, experience, and experimentation "that's going to guide them into deeper understanding of the gospel."[75] Postmoderns seek experience that is not fake, hyped, desperate, manic, manipulated or coerced. Rather, the kind of experience welcomed on the other side of the modern/postmodern divide, according to McLaren, is honest, unhyped, uncensored, unedited, and reflective. It is experience gained through the sharing of welcomed stories—"not just vaporous principles or concepts."[76] In fact, McLaren claims, "Asking them to assent to a formulation that they have no confidence in," because they have not yet lived and experienced it, "won't help them."[77] Thus the charge, "We can do better!"[78] Doing better means turning the sermon experience into a lived practice—not just dissemination of information. Creating this spiritual experience, then, becomes more than the preacher telling the people what to do, but rather takes on a role of guiding them to experience things in the present—a "group meditation."[79]

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[72] McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 152.

[73] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 129.

[74] The authors of *A is for Abductive: The Language of the Emerging Church* argue that people "don't know it when they see it; they know it when they experience it and enact it." Other noted statements from this work about the value of experience include: "The facts are not as important as the feelings, and postmoderns tend to 'feel after him' (Acts 17:27 KJV)," "experience (which includes reason and more) trumps reason alone," and "postmodern Christian leaders must become students of experiential learning as opposed to that odd modern creation, 'classroom learning'—a model of learning with limited value, based on the assembly line and factory model of human manufacturing." See Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet, and Jerry Haselmayer, *A is for Abductive: the Language of the Emerging Church*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003), 119–23.

[75] Ibid., 119.

[76] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 177.

[77] Ibid., 178

[78] Ibid.

[79] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 130. The *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour* provided opportunities for McLaren's experiential approach to the teaching event. Following each

McLaren values community as the greatest hermeneutic and explanation of the gospel—when lived by the people.[80] The message of the gospel, more than simply a disembodied message, becomes an embodied one in the context of community. Community matters in the postmodern matrix because it provides a new identity or safe haven from modernistic individualism, isolation, and loneliness.[81]

Art presents the last of the eight components. Postmodern people are artistic learners.[82] The arts, for the purpose of this discussion, include subjects such as music, drama, dance, and visuals—all used as forms of communicating. McLaren sees incorporating these artistic elements, in telling the biblical story, a must for effectively maximizing the postmodern opportunity—living as the church on the other side of modernity.[83] A statement by Dennis Haack, referenced by McLaren in *The Church on the Other Side*, might best capture his artistic homiletical philosophy. Haack states:

> Popular culture (TV, film, pop music), the very heart of the postmodern ethos, can become the beginning point for exploring the claims of Christ. . . . Modernity required an apologetic that was essentially rational; a postmodern apologetic needs to be essentially rooted in glory, with a greater emphasis on art, narrative, and image. . . .[84]

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message, McLaren, along with the conference host, would allow time for reflection, meditation, and/or creative response. Outlets such as conversing with participants, writing poems, journaling in an art book, liturgical readings with group responses, and/or meditating on a specific word from the conference were all offered as experiential opportunities as a way to process the message and help transform or reframe the participants' future outlook on life as being a part of the continuing story of Jesus.

The philosophy or mindset of the conference leaders, shared through the *Deep Shift Owner's Manual*, held that "for a life shift to take hold, it needs to be experienced in community." Communities, they argued, "need to practice new ways of relating and communicating" that "leads to "liberation and transformation instead of limitation and stagnation." See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour."

[80] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 123. McLaren notes Missiologist Lesslie Newbigin for influencing his position on the prime importance of community and contextualization of the gospel. Newbigin's work, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, is referred to often in McLaren's works in addition to many of the books produced within the emerging church movement. See Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

[81] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side,* 184.

[82] Graham Johnson, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2001), 162–66.

[83] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 181–82.

[84] Dennis Haack, "The Glory of God and Human Culture: How Do We Influence Postmodern Society?" (paper presented a the Gospel and Society Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia, June 1996, 7, quoted in McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 181.

McLaren welcomes the aesthetic, but not at the expense of being rational, encouraging a blend between the two.[85]

It appears obvious, having concluded the eight part discussion on McLaren's preaching mentality, that postmodernism is the primary influence behind his convictions. Preaching effectiveness can be obtained only through becoming "less modern and more postmodern" for all of life is essentially being processed through this philosophical grid.[86] Setting philosophy aside, how then does this postmodern homiletical mentality flesh out during the actual sermonic event? What methods of preaching does McLaren incorporate as an emerging church leader in order to connect with this changing world? Answering these questions will be the aim of the next section.

Method

Method matters to McLaren; it has potential to change the message and the message inevitably needs changing.[87] If deductive and inductive approaches to preaching are considered staples of the old way or modern method to proclamation, then what methods work best in this new postmodern matrix of ministry? This section will seek to answer that question by examining three homiletical methods used by McLaren—abductive, narrative, and art.

The abductive method presents the first viable option for the Emerging Church. McLaren, along with co-authors Leonard Sweet and Jerry Haselmayer, in *The Language of the Emerging Church*, define this method as seizing "people by the imagination and transporting them from their current world to another world, where they gain a new perspective."[88] These authors claim this emergent

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[85] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 182. In *Generous Orthodoxy* McLaren presents this balanced approach between the arts and reason for both preachers and theologians. He envisions a future where systematic theologians will not only write in prose (reasoned arguments, abstracts principles, objective truths), but will also write poetry about God, make films, compose music, and/or write plays and novels—"not as their avocation, but right along with their primary theological vocation." See McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 156.

[86] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 70, 168. McLaren believes that someone sixty or older might be able to simply brush off or reject postmodernism, but for his generation it is the primary way people process all of reality.

[87] Ibid., 68. McLaren recognizes that changing methods also changes the message. Moreover, a change in message, he believes, is needed.

[88] McLaren, Sweet, and Haselmayer, *A is for Abductive*, 31. The Abductive method is credited to logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, who is known for founding pragmatism.

approach is so radical from traditional methods that some homileticians refer to it as "post-homiletical discourses."[89]

What is the difference between this method and the inductive and/or deductive way? In one sense it makes sermons pointless—ridding preachers of their outlines and numerical points. Instead of an over-realized concentration on analysis, the attention shifts to creating an abductive experience—transporting the listeners out of their hum drum everyday lives.[90] Composing points and principles, all alliterated to the tune of five p's, is replaced with composing experiences.[91] These abductive experiences will not happen with predictable modern methods of order (step-by-step), outline, structure (clear design), defined problems, analyzed causes, reasoned arguments, planned solutions, and action steps. Taking a topic, breaking it down into bite size parts via analysis, and then illustrating and applying each sub-point has its place, but, for McLaren, it is not the effective method for the emerging church engaged in the emerging culture.[92]

Abductive experiences come by incorporating two prized elements—surprise and unpredictability. As the authors assert, "You can't abduct someone if they're expecting it."[93] The use of metaphor, problem, question, puzzle, paradox, and astonishing or affecting stories mixed with disorientation, amazement, shock, and surprise, sets the sermonic experience in motion.[94] Thought-games and search, most likely couched in story, unfolds the abductive message.[95] The unfolding of the message, unlike the modern approach, discards analytical points and options, choosing, in the words of the authors, "Turns, switchbacks, leaps, rests, sidetracks—the way conversation does—until you are 'abducted' into an experience that takes you outside yourself."[96]

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[89] Ibid., Credit for this term is given to Jim Beebe, an Episcopal priest in Akron, Ohio.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 31–32. The wrong question in this approach is to ask, "What's my point?" Instead ask, "What's my image?" and/or "What experience do I want to compose?" In McLaren's works he often jabs at what he calls the "cheesy" method of alliteration. See McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 100.

[92] McLaren, Sweet and Haselmayer, *A is for Abductive*, 32.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., 33. Examples of thought-games and search (abduction activities) are given in the form of questions: "Why do many Christians feel bored with the Bible?" or "Why do you think more about sex or chocolate than sharing your faith with friends?"

[96] Ibid.

Who does McLaren and the emerging church look to for having modeled the abductive approach? Jesus—the one considered by some as the first in history to have developed and deployed this method. In like fashion to Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon monologues, Jesus abducted his listeners—most effectively through the use of parable (Matt 13:34).[97]

Preaching in the way of Jesus, the telling of parables and stories, and/or what could be labeled abductive-narrative proclamation, introduces the second homiletical method. This particular technique for McLaren—story telling—represents the primary staple of emerging church preaching and the most effective means for connecting with postmoderns.[98] Conveying truth, honoring context, and speaking the language of postmoderns provides three potential reasons for his support of this narrative method.

The best means for conveying truth resides in story. In his *Preaching* interview, McLaren asserts that "in a postmodern world we have more confidence in truth residing in stories such as parables than just in isolated, technical words."[99] The old method or modern approach (Bible exposition—"aka textual analyis"),[100] "where sermons are presented as points in an analytical outline," or "the gospel is presented as four laws," or "five steps," simply gets in the way of postmoderns understanding the message.[101] McLaren believes that if truth is to be passed on in the context of an emerging culture, or within the emerging church, then story should be implemented as the best method for accomplishing this homiletical objective.

Narrative preaching effectively communicates truth to postmoderns; it also honors context. If every statement in the Bible

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[97] Ibid. McLaren credits Charles Peirce for identifying Jesus of Nazareth as the first person to employ the abductive method.

[98] Brian McLaren, "An Interview with Brian McLaren," interview by R. Alan Street, *CTR*, 3/2 (Spring 2006) 8. McLaren, responding to Street's question of "Why is presenting Scripture as story more effective with postmoderns than what you see as the traditional evangelical approach?" stated, "We are finding it connects." In *The Church on the Other Side* he raises the question, "Should we be cross with postmoderns for feeling that stories are the best conveyors of truth?" Further he writes, "Looking at the Bible, it appears that God might be postmodern in this respect too!" See McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 179.

[99] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 126.

[100] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 193–94. This approach, according to McLaren, from a conservative standpoint, typically employs reductionistic methods—downsizing the Scripture to nothing more than propositions, principles, abstractions, and doctrines.

[101] McLaren, "An Interview with Brian McLaren," 9.

(Old and New Testament) "takes place in story," then understanding and providing the narrative framework becomes essential for interpretation and delivery of the message.[102] In an interview by Alan Street, in the *Criswell Theological Review*, McLaren states, "The Bible comes to us as a collection of Sprit-inspired literary artifacts that can only be properly understood in their historical context (which means 'in the context of the story in which they occurred')."[103] Thus, story for McLaren communicates with hermeneutical integrity by honoring the biblical context while at the same time safe-guarding against the common homiletical error of proof-texting.[104]

Story telling conveys truth and honors context; it also speaks the language of postmoderns.[105] A 1 Peter 3 approach that offers gentleness and respect will speak their language[106]—a language embedded in the telling and holding on to the "story like a child."[107] For this reason McLaren has sought to jettison the old reductionistic method that pierces the listener with the proverbial propositional sword, breaks truth down into minutia components, and/or wields concepts and insider jargon like a hammer.[108] Pragmatically, if postmoderns are responding to narrative, then homileticians need to adjust their methods to reflect this "largely new and unexplored way."[109]

If story speaks the native language of postmoderns, serving as the best employed medium for conveying the message, then what homiletical medium might serve as the greatest distraction to the communication of the message? The versification of the Bible, which has led to strip-mining the text for abstract propositions and principles, at the neglect of allowing the story, the big story, the

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[102] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 118.

[103] McLaren, "An Interview with Brian McLaren," 8.

[104] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 118. McLaren, writing on interpreting the words of Jesus, states that interpretation "requires more than an ability to lift quotations out of context and fire them at an opponent like a missile." See McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, 121.

[105] McLaren asserts that embracing the power of story speaks the language of Jesus, the Bible, and the world today. See McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 90.

[106] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 126.

[107] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 178.

[108] Ibid., 178.

[109] McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 166. McLaren argues there is a better way to "understand and apply the Bible." The better way (new and unexplored) is summarized by these words, "We need to reclaim the Bible as narrative." McLaren uses the analogy of a good fisherman, who adjusts his method during changing weather conditions, to emphasize the need for pastors to adjust their methods to match postmodernism. See McLaren, "An Interview with Brian McLaren," 9.

mega story, the trajectory of the biblical story to speak, might very well be considered the leading culprit of biblical illiteracy and primary abuse of modern preaching.[110]

Drawing again from *A is for Abductive: The Language of the Emerging Church*, these authors raise the question in addressing the evils of versification, "What if we are ruining the Bible for parishioners by the modern ways in which we insist on presenting it to them?"[111] The conviction implied by the authors is we are ruining the Bible with our over-realized analytical methodology where every word of every verse gets broken down to Greek prefixes and iota superscripts. This modern way of "abstraction-mining and proof-texting," they believe, presents the Bible to postmoderns with a method that makes the Word seem "fragmented, frustrating, contradictory, confusing, [and] even dangerous."[112] Postmoderns bored to death and repelled by such modern methods, long for Scripture to be released and preached as "wild stories," "passionate poetry," "dramatic situation," and "song"—where the "grand movements" of the Bible are shared in a method that is "unedited, uncut, and raw."[113] The Word proclaimed in this manner, according to McLaren, Sweet, and Haselmayer, just might entice postmoderns into a love relationship for the text where they go digging into verses on their own—"complete with Greek prefixes and suffixes and roots?"[114]

One final note to narrative proclamation, the telling of stories not only represents the best method for communicating the Bible's message, it also includes the necessity for preachers to share their story.[115] McLaren, discussing the need to seize the postmodern opportunity, writes, "We need to tell our own stories: unedited, unsanitized, rough, and lumpy, not squeezed into a formula."[116]

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[110] McLaren, Sweet, Haselmayer, *A is for Abductive*, 293–95.

[111] Ibid., 295.

[112] Ibid., 297. The authors relate this danger to misuse, abuse, and misguided purposes with the Bible.

[113] Ibid., 295–97.

[114] Ibid., 296.

[115] At the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour*, McLaren practiced what he preaches by sharing numerous stories about his own life experiences. For example, as part of the Trialogue session (a separate event tacked on after the close of the main conference, which consisted of an interactive dialogue between McLaren, a Jewish Rabbi, and two Muslim clerics) he typically answered each question from the moderator with a personal story of his interactive experiences with people of other faiths. This session closed with the Muslim clerics conducting a prayer time to Allah. See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour."

[116] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 179.

Preachers who share their personal story offer listeners a life illustration of "'truth' in its postmodern form of honesty, authenticity," and "transparency."[117] An illustrated life, through story, helps promote faith since people "behave themselves into a better way of believing before they will understand themselves into a better way of believing."[118] Experience precedes belief and story helps elicit such experience that leads to belief and right living. *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, according to McLaren, presents his best example, thus far, at offering such a sermon through story.[119]

Art as a means of communicating God's story presents the final method. Music, drama, movies, and sculpting present four artistic homiletical methods implemented by McLaren. A few examples, from these four methods, have been chosen for further discussion. McLaren sees value in glorifying God through cinematic lens. While pastor at Cedar Ridge Community Church he presented a yearly series called *God in the Movies*. In this series, he would identify popular film clips that displayed moments of glory and then he would "trace that glory to its source in the Creator."[120] These clips introduced relevant spiritual themes that would then be linked to Scripture for more in depth discussion.[121]

Sculpting as a way of connecting with the creator God served as another artistic method for learning. McLaren, during one particular message, instructed the congregation to sculpt or create something out of play dough, all while the message was being

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[117] Ibid. Personal story sharing includes "doubts, failures, fears, problems, embarrassments, and confessions." McLaren holds that this type of honest story telling has "tremendous apologetic and pastoral value in a postmodern world."

[118] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 119.

[119] This author asked McLaren, at the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour*, "When it comes to preaching, what resources would you recommend that address preaching from the perspective of story/narrative and/or reframing the story of Jesus?" He stated that his book, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, presents his best attempt at communicating the big picture of the narrative biblical story. He cautioned against breaking the story line into principles, propositions, and references, such as Galatians 1:4 says. . . . Rather, he instructed to preach in terms of Paul being one in the story of God as we are one in the story of God. This approach, he believes, removes preaching from being like reading a constitution or by-laws manual. See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour."

[120] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 182.

[121] Ibid. 181. McLaren utilized visual media at the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour* (Charlotte, NC, Feb. 1-2, 2008) as part of what might be considered an abductive-narrative sermonic event. To kick off the conference (focusing the participants on the need for various social changes) he played a Sierra Club video clip of the environmental atrocities associated with coal mining in the mountains of West Virginia. The purpose of the video served to draw participants into the pain and drama experienced by town's people affected by the injustice of mountain top removal. Participants were challenged to respond—something must change, both physically and spiritually—for, it was argued, when miners cut down trees, they are also cutting down the heart of God.

delivered, and then invited people to offer their creation unto God, as a part of the invitation.[122]

Drama tied to spiritual themes, having been influenced by Willow Creek's example, has also played a role in McLaren's emerging church preaching.[123] Sermon planning takes place six months in advance to allow for such coordination.[124] In addition, music lyrics, like the movie clips, teach what is good in culture, not just always focusing on the bad, which tends to be the most common approach of pastors when emphasizing examples from popular culture.[125] For McLaren, art has teaching potential; it serves as one of the best means by which to communicate "the beautiful message of incarnation."[126]

Conclusion

This completes a review of McLaren's message, mentality, and methods for preaching within the emerging church. The intent has been to provide a first-hand detailed examination of his homiletical convictions taken from his own writings, interviews, and sermons. A recap of these findings will now be presented.

The message identified McLaren's theological/ interpretive beliefs concerning the Bible and the gospel. The Bible is cherished as a gift from God with its value weighted toward equipping the church to be missional in the world. In a postmodern, emerging church, McLarenian framework, cherishing the Bible means embracing it as a story full of mystery, intrigue, and wonder—a

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[122] McLaren's sermons can be found Online: http://www.CRCC.org.

[123] McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 182.

[124] McLaren, "Preaching to Postmoderns," 128.

[125] Ibid., 129. Cf. McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 181.

[126] Ibid., 182. At the *Deep Shift: Everything Must Change Tour*, McLaren (and the Deep Shift Team) created meditation sessions around an art booklet titled *Nude Truths:An Odyssey in Poetry, Painting, and Prose*. The aim, according to the *Deep Shift Owner's Manual* for participants, was to facilitate personal transformation by tapping into people's intuitive or imaginative component through art, which "can bring us unexpected release, realization, and reward." Participants were asked to meditate on the art pictures (with words) and do one of three things: write a poem, journal in the art book, and/or meditate on a specific word. The art pictures are non-descriptive with various shades of color. The following words associated with art work number 16, titled "Labyrinth," reads as follows: "And the secret names of all we meet who lead us deeper into our labyrinth," and "The brooding Spirit works tirelessly, nudging us toward the voice, the word, the touch we need, then forcing the choice—to be or to ignore." The question "Where is God calling you to change, to shift, to live more fully into this new framing story of Jesus in order to be his hands and feet in a world of crises?" showed on the overhead screen during this one hour quiet time of meditation. See Kristi Ylvisaker and Mary Ylvisaker Nilsen, *Nude Truths: An Odyssey in Poetry, Painting, and Prose*, (Des Moines, Zion, 2007), n.p.

moving story that edits from the plot the modern nuisances such as propositions, authority, foundations, and doctrines—rediscovering the story line with questions, skepticism, uncertainty, and on-going conversation. Seeing Scripture through a postmodern missional lens also represents or helps to understand McLaren's view of the gospel. The gospel's core, rather than being fixated with modernity's reductionistic personal salvation message, which emphasizes the cross, sin, repentance, redemption, hell, and eternal life, is centered on ushering in the kingdom of God here on earth—a better place for all to live, where peace, harmony, and justice reigns.

The mentality section captured McLaren's homiletical philosophy. Eight components or streams of thought were identified—all derived from a central ideology or represented streams flowing out of the same lake of postmodernism. A postmodern homiletical bent welcomes the mysterious for its beauty and intrigue. It presents a humble, generous hermeneutical posture and prizes the poetic voice in presentation, conversation, and dialogue. Experience embodied within community is an aim of the sermonic gathering and the scientific, rational, and educational model of learning is complemented, if not replaced, by the arts—drama, music, dance, painting, sculpting, movies, and visuals.

Method, representing McLaren's means of communicating, presents the final summary. Composing experiences through abductive-narratives effectively conveys truth while honoring the biblical context through a medium that speaks the language of postmoderns. Preaching by story protects postmoderns from needless versification, which frees the text, through the homiletician, to speak wildly, poetically, and musically about the grand narrative of God and man. Art provides the complementary assistance needed to bring the story alive and speak in creative and earthy language about the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

McLaren's homiletical convictions, discovered through an assessment of his message, mentality, and methods, now becomes the primary data by which to assess his preaching in light of biblical revelation. This will take place in chapter nine. As for now, it is time to focus attention on the next selected emerging church preacher, who, like McLaren, is generous toward preaching as conversation, a preaching he calls progressional dialogue.

CHAPTER 5
DOUG PAGITT: RE-IMAGINED PREACHING

Message

For Pagitt, the message (theology), one worth believing, is progressive, evolving, and ever changing.[127] In *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches* he writes, "Complex understandings meant for all people, in all places, for all times, are simply not possible."[128] The world has changed and continues to change and thus the message about God from the past, for Pagitt, is not sufficient for today.[129] Therefore, he holds that the message requires adjustments, changes, and adaptations in order for people to live faithfully into the story of God in each generation.[130] Assessing just how this progressive ideology manifests itself in relation to Pagitt's view of Scripture and the gospel will be the central aim of this section.

The Bible

What is the Bible to Pagitt? Following his lead in *A Christianity Worth Believing*, it might be best to express what the Bible is not.[131] Pagitt identifies and critiques what he considers to be four widely held views of Scripture of which he opposes. First, Pagitt argues,

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[127] Doug Pagitt, "The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 136–37.

[128] Ibid., 137.

[129] Ibid., 138.

[130] The lack of change in Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy has been irritating for Pagitt. He writes, "We have revolutionized how we live and nearly all that we believe, know, and understand—but much of the thinking and practices in Christianity have *stubbornly* stayed the same" (emphasis added). See Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People In Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 17.

[131] Doug Pagitt, *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope-Filled, Open-Armed, Alive-and-Well Faith for the Left Out, Left Behind, and Let Down in Us All* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008). Pagitt's aim in this work is to invite the reader on a journey in exploring the possibilities of faith in hopes of discovering a Christianity worth believing. Chapter 6, "It's in the Way That You Use It," covers how he reads, understands, and uses the Bible. This particular work of Pagitt's will be used extensively for this section (message) of this chapter—for it provides the most comprehensive and up to date examination into Pagitt's continually evolving theological position.

referencing the strange language of student Bible drills ("sword drills") while acknowledging it's probable origin in Scripture (Eph 6:17), that the Bible was never meant to be seen or used so literally—as an actual weapon.[132] The notion that others view the Bible in this way disturbs him. He finds it peculiar that some "truly believe we are at war with the human enemies of our faith."[133] He has found Christians that hold this position to inappropriately use the Bible to "stab and shred and rip into what they believe to be faulty theology," which only leads to "pain, suffering, and humiliation."[134] This does not negate Pagitt's understanding that Scripture has instructive value, but when it "is used as a tactical force to beat others into ideological submission," it becomes, for him, the "sword of spite," not the "sword of the Spirit."[135] The Bible used as a weapon simply does not reflect Pagitt's position.

Second, the Bible classified and used as a reference book or encyclopedia irks Pagitt.[136] The angst here involves faulty hermeneutics. Too often, he argues, Scripture is plucked from its cultural context and then used to "construct narratives, stories, and systems that suit our purposes."[137] Pagitt refers to this practice as the extraction method—a method that comes by training, not by accident.[138] Imposing upon the text to find a timeless nugget of truth within the story of the Scripture that applies to the present day context, describes a homiletical method that Pagitt believes discards context and ignores the communities of faith in which, and for which, the words were crafted. He rebukes this approach as "plain wrongheaded" based on the conviction that "context and culture of the community have everything to do with what's written in the Bible and how we read it and live it."[139] Therefore Pagitt, desiring to

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[132] Ibid., 56.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid., 57.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid., 58. Cf. Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 125, where Pagitt remarks, "To rip the quotes from their context and give them generic biblical authority is not helpful, and I believe it disembowels the Bible of the very authority many understand it to have."

[138] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 58. Pagitt writes, "I was trained to go into the Bible and get the truth from it. The idea was that inside of all that narrative, behind all the context and culture, was a nugget of truth. My goal as a reader was to find that timeless piece of wisdom, that universally applicable principle, and drop it into the situation at hand. . . . No ordinary person could find these secret truths, but I was trained to find them and get them out."

[139] Ibid., 59. Cf. Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 125. Here Pagitt states, "What I find objectionable about this is that it removes the context and places authority in the fact that a statement is in the Bible rather than considering the faith and lives of the people involved."

maintain the integrity of the overall story, distances himself from "selective quoting" and calls for forthrightness about the changes done to the story when parts are ripped out of its whole.[140]

The Bible as a memorized playbook presents the third viewpoint opposed by Pagitt.[141] He views this common method among Christians of memorizing select passages of Scripture, at the expense of others, as having a hidden hermeneutical error. Whether intentional or not, memorizing select Scriptures, detached from the whole story, inserts "ourselves into the message of the Bible," says Pagitt, which creates an imposed interpretation upon the text.[142] Bristling at this Bible method, as a result of his big story bent, he defies anyone who claims they are learning the whole Bible through such a reductionistic approach.[143]

Inerrancy presents the fourth and final position on the Bible that Pagitt opposes.[144] Pagitt defines the inerrancy debate as holding to the Bible as being the literal Word of God, by nature being completely true, and the guide to truth for man, having originated from God.[145] The only problem for Pagitt resides in the fact that the Bible never says this. Rejecting a traditional implication of 2 Tim 3:16–17, Pagitt holds that the apostle Paul would have never meant and/or that Timothy would have never interpreted "God-breathed" as meaning God's literal words. Rather, these followers of Jesus would have understood these words as projecting the notion of God as the "creator and life-giver."[146] Therefore, instead of Timothy receiving God's Word, he was receiving merely "hints of God speaking" as an active voice in partnership with humanity, through, and in, the ongoing community of faith.[147]

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[140] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 60. Another term Pagitt uses to describe using select passages of Scripture without referring to the entirety of the context from which they came is the "reference approach." Pagitt chides Driscoll for using this method. He writes, "Placing Bible passages in and around an argument is not in and of itself a proper way of being informed by the Scriptures." See Doug Pagitt, "Response to Mark Driscoll," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 43.

[141] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 61.

[142] Ibid., 62–63.

[143] Ibid., 63. The memorization of Scripture seems to be in conflict with Pagitt's holistic approach to spiritual formation, which seeks to expand learning beyond the acquiring of knowledge—educational model. Chopped up, memorized passages that have been taken out of context, does not lend itself to the type of holistic growth Solomon's Porch/Pagitt desires. They desire to "move beyond belief-based faith to life-lived, holistic faith." See Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 19–23.

[144] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 65.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid., 66.

The Bible was not "a removed 'truth text'" for Paul, nor should it be contrived as such for the church today, argues Pagitt.[148] Rather, the Bible is an active and living book that, in his own words, "invites us to step into the stories, not as observers, but as participants in the faith that is alive and well and still being created."[149] The implication being, the Bible is not a fixed, immutable, infallible Word from above, but rather a piece of God's ongoing story in humanity; a story that Pagitt, Solomon's Porch, and other communities of faith, can participate in as they join in the ongoing creative activity of writing their own story for today, just as Paul did for his day.

These four Bible views presented above, the Bible as a weapon, the Bible as an encyclopedia, the Bible as a collection of verses, and the Bible as an inerrant work of truth, represent what Pagitt considers "simplistic methods of study" or beliefs that have the potential to "take what was meant to be a life-giving force for believers and threaten to turn it into a dead, meaningless muddle of words."[150] Worse yet, it's the rigid authoritarian types that he believes most live by these positions—types and positions to which he enjoys playing the contrarian.[151] Therefore it is time, having presented Bible beliefs Pagitt is contrary toward, to now examine what he is for, when it concerns the Bible. Three categories: narrative, authority, and community, will serve as a guide by which to present his views.

First, the Bible is "full narrative" to Pagitt.[152] No part of the Bible exists in isolation; each part of the Bible is connected to the

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[148] Ibid., 67. Cf. Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 35, 166. Pagitt writes about his sermons, "At Solomon's Porch, sermons are not primarily about my extracting truth from the Bible to apply to people's lives."

[149] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 67.

[150] Ibid., 63.

[151] Pagitt defines being a contrarian as one who always sees "the other side of an issue, a different perspective on the conversation." He believes this is a trait he has been given, not by choice, but by genetic predisposition, as being "positively oppositional." Ibid., 6. A personal encounter with Pagitt's contrarian ways was experienced when this author quoted John 14:6 in a discussion with him about salvation. Pagitt responded to my reference of this Scripture with, "Do you really believe that?" This interaction took place at the "National Conference on Preaching" sponsored by *Preaching*, April 24–26, 2006, in Dallas, Texas.

[152] Ibid., 57. Pagitt speaks of his love for the narrative of the Bible coming upon him immediately after his conversion. Quickly, he purchased a Bible and began reading the stories of Jesus, Paul, and the early church, with "ferocity." He loves the Bible and refers to himself as a Bible hoarder like the "Depression-era grandmother at a café shoving packets of sugar in her purse" (52–54).

bigger story.[153] All stories in Scripture, whether short or long, are interrelated; no stories are disconnected from the whole. In Pagitt's own words, there simply exists no "stand alone entries."[154] Reading the Bible in this framework, overall story, guards against reductionism in interpretation, which easily leads to confusion and misunderstanding.[155] Pagitt claims that seeing and understanding the overarching picture and message, by not condensing it to snippets that might merely reflect preconceived notions, allows the narrative story to "shape us" versus us shaping it.[156] Proper interpretation of Scripture, then, must include a big story understanding of the Bible as a whole—not as individual parts.

Second, the Bible is authoritative for Pagitt—however, probably not in the traditional (*sola scriptura*) sense. He writes, "The Bible gains its authority from God and the communities who grant it authority."[157] The chosen verb, "gains," seems to imply an ongoing, moving, changing, type of authority that comes partly from God and partly from community. This fluid understanding of authority, according to Pagitt, allows the Bible "to be alive and free of the constraints we throw on it."[158] This allows for the space needed to "continually reconstruct" the message (theology) in order to address the varied and pressing cultural issues of today.[159] Postmodern sexuality provides one contemporary example that he believes will require changes in theology in order to meet the changes in humanity.[160] He argues that "new conclusions about sexuality," and even the consideration of "new ways of being sexual," will become a necessity in light of, and driven by, the onslaught of advanced genetic, social, and cultural knowledge about sexuality and gender issues, as compared with prior generations.[161] He calls for these new insights to be integrated into the churches

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[153] Ibid., 57-58.

[154] Ibid., 57.

[155] Ibid., 60.

[156] Ibid., 58.

[157] Ibid., 64.

[158] Ibid., 65.

[159] Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 138. Pagitt writes, referring to this dual role of Scripture and community in determining orthodoxy and orthopraxy, "We focus our efforts on trying to figure out if our lives could be relevant to the story of God, not if the Bible can be relevant to our lives." This happens for Solomon's Porch when the stories of the Bible "couple" with their "experiences, hopes, and ideas." See Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 168.

[160] Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 139. Pagitt remarks, "We need a theology that will allow us to consider the changes in humanity that are upon us and will be even greater in the future."

[161] Ibid., 140.

theology or message, which by nature will require a flexible view of Scripture and authority—by God and communities of faith.[162]

Lastly, the Bible is a living member of the community of faith—Solomon's Porch. Traversing back to the prior discussion on authority, it is in this community of faith that Pagitt believes the Bible finds its voice of authority and power.[163] Its living voice, expressed in and through people of the past and present, provides a "source" of wisdom and truth, in narrative form, as part of "the continuing story of God's partnership with humanity."[164] Thus, for Pagitt, and the people of Solomon's Porch,[165] the Bible lives as a fully integrated "sort of best friend" in their Christian community.[166] How this living Bible speaks to or leads Pagitt to understand the gospel message of Jesus will now become the priority and final subject of this section.

The Gospel

What is the gospel to Pagitt? Following the same lead as his view of Scripture, it's best to begin with what it is not. Pagitt, in *A Christianity Worth Believing*, labors extensively to deconstruct an orthodox understanding of the gospel message in order to present a new message, or new gospel, one that he believes has existed all along.[167] Therefore, this section will attempt to first present the gospel story he's rejecting, and second, it will seek to ferret his reconstructed, reformulated, and/or renewed version of the gospel.

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[162] Ibid.

[163] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 66.

[164] Ibid., 54, 56.

[165] A member of Solomon's Porch, in an award winning video about the church that features Pagitt, described the Bible in this light, "I see the Bible changing. I don't see it as stagnant and so for us, as a community of Christians, to say we need to believe this one thing and hold to it tightly and make sure it's never questioned, that's a real waste of energy with all the things we could be doing in the world." This also reflects the churches aim to have no defined statement of faith that everyone must adhere to, according to another church member interviewed in the video. See AllenCKM, "*Spiritual Revolution*," *Current.Tv*, n.p. [cited 24 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://current.com/items/84907091_Spiritual_revolution.

[166] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 168. Pagitt also refers to the Bible as "a member of our community of faith—an essential member that must be listened to on all matters on which it speaks" (167).

[167] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 9. This work of Pagitt's is his professed effort in breaking the "no-talk rules" by sharing what he believes "the good news has been about all along." Based on his philosophy about Christianity it is sure to include change. Pagitt writes, "Christianity is not a faith of conservation and preservation. It is a faith of creation, participation, movement, and change" (7).

What is Pagitt rejecting, or at least re-imagining, about the traditional gospel message?[168] Sin, judgment, and salvation, provide helpful categories by which to address this question. First, disintegration should be the term used to describe sin, which means living out of sync with "what is normal and desired" by God.[169] However, do not mistake disharmony with godly choices as disconnection from God. Pagitt anathematizes definitions that refer to sin as inherit evil or separation.[170] He adamantly rejects any doctrinal notion that man is born in sin or that sin causes severance from God.[171] In his message, no chasm exists between God and man, nor has there ever been a great divide between the two.

Pagitt's rejection of core/traditional aspects of the gospel, or what he calls an "out of date" theology, is reflected in his writings that debunk the notion of original sin and total depravity.[172] He states, "We can say we believe that humanity is evil and depraved and that we enter the world this way. But I don't think this fits the Christian story, nor do many of us truly hold to it."[173] This does not negate the reality of sin for Pagitt; he simply rewrites the classical view of it. This classical position on the doctrine of sin, written to appease a Greek worldview,[174] according to Pagitt, insists that "people start rotten and get better if the right formula is applied" while Pagitt's view understands sin as a result of "systems,

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[168] It is this author's conclusion that Pagitt has fully rejected the orthodox view of the gospel as found in 1 Corinthians 15, in addition to many historic creeds. However, in attempting to represent Pagitt's position with accuracy, it is important to note that he occasionally utilizes language that seems to embrace the traditional position or at least teeters with the idea. Yet, even when this is done, his position remains fuzzy based on the lack of clarity as to what he means, or how he defines the same terms. For example, in his response to Driscoll's position on the gospel he writes, "I find God's hopes, dreams, and plans for the world to include the eradication of sin and freedom for humankind through Jesus, but those are not the primary point of the gospel." He goes on to state that Driscoll and he "are telling different stories of Christianity." See Pagitt, *Response to Mark Driscoll*, 42.

[169] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 168.

[170] Ibid., 112.

[171] Ibid., 136–37. Referencing the creation story, Pagitt argues that it "never suggests that the sin of Adam and Eve sends them into a state of depravity. There is nothing in the story that tells us that God steps over to the other side of some great chasm once Eve bites down on that fruit. Certainly there is sin, but the result of sin is a change in our relationship with God and with others, not a change in the basic makeup of humanity." He concludes this argument by acknowledging man's capability of "missteps," with the hope being God's desire for us to join in doing good things in the World.

[172] Ibid., 136.

[173] Ibid., 124.

[174] Ibid., 155. The orthodox position of sin is not a biblical viewpoint according to Pagitt, but rather a position originated by the Greeks. Pagitt blames the Greeks for altering the core of the gospel message—away from God's goodness and more about man's sinfulness. Their reason for creating a "sin-centric story" was to help the citizens of Rome understand, or depend upon, their need for the church and God.

hurts, and patterns of our world" that "create disharmony with God and one another."[175] Pagitt concludes it is "life" itself "that creates illness and sin."[176] Thus, Pagitt rejects original sin and the fall as part of a core component of the gospel message.

Rejecting the notion of original sin also leads to a rejection of God as judge over sin. God, as one who opposes sin and holds humanity accountable for sin, is a God in which Pagitt has no interest.[177] He refers to this view of God as "God-of-the-Gap theology," or as the "up-and-out God."[178] This is a view of God understood in terms of His being in an exalted position of authority and power, along with possessing such traits as holiness, purity, and perfection.[179] This transcendent God holds mankind in check for breaking His laws, which results in "death and damnation."[180] Pagitt, putting it bluntly, as he states it, does not want to know this God.[181] Rather, he rejects this judicial or legal system view of God that sees Him as a great and mighty judge over sin.[182]

If sin does not separate man from God and no judgment awaits humanity because of sin, according to Pagitt's view of the gospel, then what need is there for a savior? What need is there for Jesus? Pagitt admits this dilemma, "I know that rethinking the nature of God, the state of humanity, the essence of sin, leads to

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[175] Ibid., 165.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid., 99. Pagitt claims that the more he learned of the transcendent God, who disdains sin and punishes the unrighteous, the more he found himself "longing for the God I knew before I became a Christian—the one I'd whisper to at night, the one who made me feel less alone, the one who seemed to hold on to me when I was uncertain and in danger of losing my way."

[178] Ibid.

[179] Ibid., 99

[180] Ibid., 150. A natural outflow of rejecting God as judge is rejecting the doctrine of hell. Pagitt rejects the biblical position of a literal hell and heaven. See Doug Pagitt, "An Interview with Doug Pagitt by Todd Friel," on *The Way of the Master Radio*, n.p. [cited 22 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://www.wayofthemasterradio.com/podcast/index.php?s=doug+pagitt.

[181] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 99. Pagitt sees this judicial, up-and-out God, all-powerful, removed, holy king, as more about Greek and Roman mythology—"influenced more by Zeus and other gods than by the story of our faith"—and Greek philosophers like Plato, then later "codified by the likes of men like Augustine. Ibid., 100–101. Cf. Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 128, where he writes, "Augustine supported the Greek understanding of God taken primarily from the Greek Pantheon imagery, and proclaimed that people were born separate from God."

[182] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 150. Pagitt views the judicial model of the gospel as a position that hamstrings God. In this model the law has the control, not the judge. Thus God is seen as helpless and powerless and as one who has no choice but to offer Jesus as a sacrifice for sin (154). This helpless-God version and/or the angry judge version is problematic for Pagitt for this judicial model places sin at the center of the story. In doing so, he writes, "love, grace, mercy, compassion, goodness, and even God become minor players that must be subject to the law. The gospel itself becomes less about God and more about the sin problem" (154–55).

rethinking Jesus."[183] He continues, "If there is no gap, why do we need Jesus? If sin is really our 'dis-integration' with the life of God and not an ontological problem of our humanity, why do we need Jesus?"[184] The point in raising these questions here is not to provide Pagitt's positioning of Jesus in his message, which does exist, but rather to establish his rejection of the orthodox message of Jesus as the way of salvation and relationship with God, by means of His substitutionary sacrifice (shed blood) on the cross, in order to pay the sin debt for mankind and appease the wrath of God.[185] This message, which for Pagitt presents merely a Greek construction of the story, highlights "the up-and-out, distant, vengeful God," of whom he rejects—positioning the understanding of Jesus as savior and redeemer of man from sin as a questionable proposition.[186]

If the core, or perhaps even the whole, of the orthodox position of the gospel is dismissed as merely a "Greco-Roman hybrid,"[187] of the true God or true good news message, then what does Pagitt propose in its place as the gospel message for proclamation today? Addressing the previous three categories from Pagitt's contrarian viewpoint will provide the framework by which to hopefully answer this question.

Dismissing sin and separation, Pagitt opts for integration and co-creation. Pagitt's theology of integration states that the "'chief end of man'" is to live in harmony with God as partners in love and work—loving and working with God, loving and working with one another, and loving and working with all of creation."[188] This triune love club between man, God, and creation, is the biblical story for Pagitt, a story that has never been interrupted or

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[183] Ibid., 174.

[184] Ibid., 175.

[185] In *Church Re-Imagined* Pagitt speaks of being enlightened by Mark 1:15 where Jesus states that "The Kingdom of God is near." Pondering on this statement launched Pagitt on a new journey with his faith. He asks, "Could it be that the Good News Jesus talked about was less a call to believe in the things that happened to him or would happen to and through him than an invitation into Kingdom life?" See Pagitt, *Church-Re-Imagined*, 35. The full expression of this new found interest in the kingdom of God appears in *A Christianity Worth Believing*. However, with this new focus of the gospel, as previously stated, he seems to have rejected the former position.

[186] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 174, 181. For Pagitt, this promise of salvation from what he refers to as the Greek version of the gospel (orthodox position) has its disadvantages. It leaves Christians stuck in an afterlife-focused faith and it "does little to propel many of us into living joyously here and now." He goes on to say that "with its focus on our unworthiness and God's separateness, it promotes just the opposite kind of life." Ibid., 113–14.

[187] Ibid., 99.

[188] Ibid., 137.

divided by sin.[189] Mankind, being "inherently godly," has worth, value, and purpose in participating with God in creation by offering innate "God-inspired goodness."[190] This intrinsic goodness exists in everyone (*imago dei*).[191] And, it reflects uninterrupted connectedness with God as a result of all humanity "possessing the light of God within them."[192] True, writes Pagitt, "That light might brighten or dim as a person lives well with God or moves away from God, but the light is never extinguished"[193] Man is invited to use this light of God within to partner, participate, and co-create with Him in order to bring "about all that God desires for the world."[194] Living joyfully in this inherent divine nature, a relationship of never ending fellowship with God that has always been and forever will be, by integrating and co-creating with Him on earth, presents Pagitt's gospel message for the church today.

Instead of God as judge, the "up-and-out God," Pagitt opts to unite with the "down-and-in God."[195] This "down-and-in God" (unlike the "up-and-out God") welcomes a vibrant, participatory, multi-perspectival, community focused, creative, diverse, and open to varied beliefs kind of faith.[196] He is the God "who cares, who listens, sustains, cradles, cries, and is right there with them all the time," writes Pagitt.[197] He's the God all mankind has always been connected with in spite of moments or seasons of disintegration. Pagitt's own conversion story testifies of this God in his life. Even

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[189] Ibid., 153. Pagitt holds that mankind is created as "God's partners, not God's enemies. Sin does a lot of damage to that partnership—it disables us, it discourages us, it disturbs us—but it never destroys the bond that exists between God and humanity."

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid., 120.

[192] Ibid., 141. Pagitt recommends flaming this light within all of humanity as potentially the greater aim for followers of the Jesus way versus propagating right words or messages. See Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 126.

[193] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 142.

[194] Ibid., 144.

[195] Ibid., 116–30. Pagitt devotes the entirety of chapter 10 to this view of God.

[196] Ibid., 106–7. Statements by Pagitt that reflect these sentiments include the following: "I don't want to have a Christianity around distinctives," "We have people who don't believe in the resurrection at Solomon's Porch—they can be covenant participating members and not believe in the resurrection or God," and "We have a Muslim in our church,"—which speaks to the inclusiveness of Pagitt's gospel. See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church," Panel Speakers: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Doug Pagitt, and Karen Ward, n.p. *Personal notes*, June 1–2, 2007, Seattle, Washington. Cf. also Pagitt, "An Interview with Doug Pagitt by Todd Friel," for a response from Pagitt concerning the eternal destiny of people of other faiths. Pagitt believes that Christians and Muslims will be judged, restored, and healed by God in the same way. He also believes heaven or hell is not an actual place and he condemns language or behavior that identifies people (spiritually) as either sheep or goats—terminology used by Jesus.

[197] Pagitt, *Christianity Worth Believing*, 110.

when he was "living in a way that hurt the efforts of God," he says God was always there in the midst of his strife—never distant.[198] He continues,

> My conversion was the beginning of a new way of living, a new connection with God. God hadn't been waiting for me to do something before God was willing to get involved in my life. God had been involved all along. The disconnection ended not when God decided I was righteous enough or clean enough or enough of a believer to cross the bridge but when I saw what it looked like to live with God and understood the invitation to join in.[199]

This personable "down-and-in God" for Pagitt is decidedly not the untouchable, legalistic, judging, Greek version of God that suggest we're lucky if He doesn't "smite us all with one stroke of a mighty hand," or that we're in deep sin if we have the audaciousness to "believe God has any use for us."[200] No, that God is unbelievable to Pagitt, but not the "down-and-in God," who is a God mankind can believe in, and join in with him, as agents of His goodness in the world today.[201]

Judgment and punishment for sin has been eradicated in Pagitt's message; therefore, there is no need for a savior who saves mankind from sin and the wrath of God.[202] So, where does Jesus fit in? As previously stated, Pagitt wrestled with this question in coming to grips with his new theology. Although the answer was not clear initially, leaving Jesus out of the message was never an option. He writes, "I didn't know the answer to the Jesus question, but I knew this: I didn't want to follow any faith that didn't have a prime place for Jesus."[203] He found his solution for Jesus in the Hebrew story. The Hebrew God, contrary to the Greek version, presents an "integrated God" that brings healing and wholeness to all creation."[204] It is a story that expresses his "down-and-in God" and one that has Jesus at its center. Pagitt effuses, "The whole Bible

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[198] Ibid., 113.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid., 114.
[201] Ibid., 107, 115.
[202] Ibid., 128.
[203] Ibid., 175.
[204] Ibid.

is the Jesus story" and "the Jewish story proved to be the salvation of my Jesus."[205] So what does Pagitt's interpretation of the Hebrew story proclaim about Jesus?

The Hebrew/Pagitt story of Jesus presents Him in the same light as Moses and Joshua—a leader, map, and/or guide to the promised land—offering and showing what partnership with God looks like.[206] Jesus, having an eternal relationship with God, has never been disconnected from the story of God and the people of God.[207] In contrast, the Greek God of the Gentiles embraced Jesus as Savior from punishment and condemnation, trusting in Him as their substitute and sin-bearer, as an appeasement of God's holy wrath.[208] Pagitt's message embraces the former Jesus, not the latter Jesus of the Greeks.

If Pagitt's message rejects the need for expiation and propitiation, then what significance is there for the sacrifice of Jesus? The answer, he believes, lies in Jesus' mission as a revolutionary. Some Jews held to deliverance through war; Jesus brought deliverance through his death and subsequent resurrection. He marked the end of war providing hope and an invitation for all to join in the healing of the world.[209] Pagitt describes Jesus' sacrificial significance in this manner,

> Jesus was not sent as the selected one to appease the anger of the Greek blood god. Jesus was sent to fulfill the promise of the Hebrew love God by ending human hostility. This world God created is one of peace and harmony and integration. Through Jesus, all humanity is brought into that world. And that is the point of the resurrection.[210]

Not only is this peace and harmony on earth the point of the resurrection, it just as prominently provides the theological thrust for Pagitt's position about the kingdom of God, heaven, and in

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[205] Ibid., 176.

[206] Ibid., 181.

[207] Ibid., 180.

[208] Ibid., 186. Pagitt writes, "The Greek gospel is about the distant God coming into contact with lowly humanity through the atoning life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the perfect, sinless Son of God."

[209] Ibid., 191.

[210] Ibid., 194.

essence the gospel itself.[211] Thus, Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection provides and pictures the promise of God to heal creation and to allow all humanity to live in partnership and love with Him.[212] Discovering just how Pagitt communicates this gospel message of love, peace, and world harmony, by examining his philosophy and methodology of preaching, will become the remaining focus of this chapter.

Mentality

Predictably, Pagitt's contrarian mindset affects not only the Bible and message of the gospel, but also the way in which it is communicated. His "positively oppositional" way of thinking has created a philosophy of preaching that presents a significant, if not radical, paradigm shift from traditional homiletical theory and practice.[213] If the message is in a continual state of flux and change in order to meet the sensibilities of the present culture, then naturally the mindset and methods of how it should be communicated needs re-imagined as well. Pagitt's preaching book, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*, provides what he believes to be the postmodern solution. Maintaining the same order as the prior section, it is only fitting to unpack Pagitt's preaching philosophy by first examining what he believes preaching should not be before presenting his re-imagined and redefined perspective on the subject.[214]

What's the problem with preaching? Pagitt might well argue, everything. He insists that "preaching, as we know it, is a tragically broken endeavor," it simply "doesn't work—at least not in the ways

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[211] Pagitt believes the church today has probably been preaching "too much Jesus at the expense of the kingdom of God," Ibid., 218. The kingdom of God and heaven is not to be considered as another place or later happening. The kingdom of God is His activity here, now, and forever on earth, and heaven is a "state of being" in which "all God's hopes for the earth, all of God's desires for this partnership with humanity come to fruition," Ibid., 222. The fact that the kingdom has come is the gospel message to Pagitt, Ibid., 232. Cf. Doug Pagitt, "An Interview with Doug Pagitt by Todd Friel."

[212] Ibid., 194-5. Pg. 211 "The point of the resurrection was to recalibrate the balance of creation, to bring all of it into sync with the agenda of God. The resurrection was God showing us, through Jesus, that living out the agenda of God means living out an agenda of love and life."

[213] See footnote 25.

[214] Pagitt states that as a pastor, he is often referred to as the preacher and this has become a role he no longer relishes. He writes, "There was a time when I felt my ability to deliver sermons was a high calling that I sought to refine but didn't need to redefine. Those days are gone. Now I find myself regularly redefining my role and the role of preaching." See Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 10.

we hope."[215] He begins his assessment of the problem by first redefining, or renaming traditional preaching. "Speaching," the newly created term, refers to "the style of preaching that's hardly distinguishable from a one-way speech."[216] This type of preaching or rather "speaching," according to Pagitt, "is an ineffectual means of communication" and in relation to the church "damages our people and creates a sense of powerlessness in them."[217] Therefore, for Pagitt, continuing with a lecture mentality that strangles the voice and involvement of the church presents and prolongs a significant problem for preaching within the context of postmodernism—a problem that must be corrected.

The preaching ministry of Reformed minister and "master orator," D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, writes Pagitt, serves as a prime example of this type of preaching as speaching. According to an excerpt chosen by Pagitt to display Lloyd Jones' preaching philosophy, he holds that the expositional preaching of the Word of God should be "the primary task of the church and of the Christian minister," and seemingly all other activities, such as responsive readings, extended singing and chanting, greater attention to ceremony, form and ritual, films, testimonies, and engaged living among the people of Christ, ought to be considered secondary, if some are even considered worthy at all.[218] Preaching, in the traditional sense of one man proclaiming propositional truth to a gathering of people, for Lloyd-Jones was paramount for the church and all other activities paled in significance.

Lloyd-Jones' conviction toward a high view of preaching flowed from his high view of Scripture. He represented a preaching mentality that Pagitt would probably describe as "the text enlivened through the preaching act becomes the word of God"—a position of which he disagrees.[219] The aim for Pagitt in the preaching event is not the text enlivened, but the people. He writes, "What we are to do is preach so that the good news becomes enlivened in the lives

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[215] Ibid., 18–19.

[216] Ibid., 12.

[217] Ibid., 22.

[218] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 117. The quote is taken from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 19.

[219] Doug Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue: An Interview with Doug Pagitt," interview by Michael Duduit, *Preaching* 21 (2006): 35. Pagitt says of this view of preaching that it is "not the avenue I come from and I think it's a much more difficult thing, especially among postmodern people."

of people."[220] He realizes, for those who view preaching as "telling of the text," that his preaching philosophy places him within the confines of another homiletical camp.[221] Evidence for this stems from the fact that unlike Lloyd-Jones, Pagitt devalues speaching as the top priority in the church, and as the only means of preaching.[222] He believes that if changed lives are the aim, then preaching needs to be placed in a secondary position behind the very thing Lloyd-Jones belittles in the preaching event and of which Pagitt cherishes. Pagitt writes, "Preaching matters, but it isn't our central contribution; more lives will be changed by the relationships created and lived out in our communities than by what we say in some sermon."[223] Therefore, it is obvious, in contrarian proportions, that Lloyd-Jones' view of leading the church by preaching (speaching) "bears little resemblance" to Pagitt's mentality for the same task.[224] Having questioned the value and undermined the role of traditional preaching for the church, what then does Pagitt identify as the major problem with this view and form of modern day proclamation?

The central attributing cause of failure for this type of proclamation resides in a "relationship problem" in contrast to the typical reasons given, such as the people, method, preacher, or content of the message.[225] Preaching carried out in a speaching format, argues Pagitt, places the preacher in "control of the content, speed, and conclusion of the presentation," which entirely ignores the Christian community.[226] The preacher, or rather speacher, develops his speech in complete isolation from the body of hearers, which by nature excludes church/audience integration in the sermonic event and leaves the message delivered feeling like the listener has been "struck by a drive-by sermon."[227] Pagitt holds that this approach to preaching does not take into consideration the

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[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 122.

[223] Ibid., 122.

[224] Ibid., 117.

[225] Ibid., 20–21; 76–80. Pagitt defines these typical responses for the failure of preaching as follows: the problem with people is their hardened and unreceptive hearts; the problem with the method means the form is not the best fit for the communication of the message for a given audience; the problem of the preacher resides in the preacher's calling and personal walk with God; and the problem with the content is a lack of providing a clear or more authentic message of Jesus.

[226] Ibid., 22.

[227] Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," 36.

particular people gathered for the message in a particular context. Their voice is muted by the speacher and everyone, no matter who shows up during a particular sermon time slot, receives the same generic message, which does little to build relationships and invite people into the story as participants of God's ongoing work in the world.[228]

Postmoderns or people with postmodern sensibilities do not welcome a less than handcrafted message. Sermons that deliver generalizations, assumptions, and broad sweeping understandings and statements, says Pagitt, do not connect with postmodern spirituality and/or unite the listener in a way that says "now this really affects my life."[229] Nor are they impressed with speachers applying generic messages to their lives. Pagitt sees this traditional applicatory homiletical approach as flawed and contributing to the same relationship problem. Postmoderns are suspicious and lack confidence with this modern preaching mindset. It grates on them, or at least Pagitt, when pastors "think they can apply the messages they create to the lives of other people."[230] Pagitt questions the gall of preachers who think "that what people need to know exists in the mind and plans of one person who is often little more than an acquaintance for most of the people in the church."[231] Generic messages with presumed application points simply do not connect with the postmoderns.

Preachers who engage in speaching turn a blind eye to the postmodern need to be connected. This is detrimental to not only people with postmodern sensibilities, but it rubs against the very nature of humanity. Pagitt believes speaking is the means by which people become connected; participation through having a voice is the essence of humanity.[232] Therefore, speaching, by nature, silences the voice of others and for the church it cuts community out of the story, the sermon, and/or the gathered preaching event, which disregards the priesthood of all believers and undermines the very means by which people are led "more deeply in to the story of

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[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid., 35.

[230] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 123.

[231] Ibid. Pagitt ties the application problem directly to the speaching model. He writes, "The very nature of speaching—one person choosing, researching, and preparing the content of the speech—makes it impossible for our speeches to apply to anyone in concrete, meaningful ways. It's an isolated act with an isolated effect" (36).

[232] Ibid., 163.

God."[233] Postmoderns become followers of the Jesus way by experience and participation; speaching inhibits such a relationship within the sermonic event.

For Pagitt, speaching is clearly the problem with preaching in the postmodern twenty-first century. Speaching silences relationships and stifles people hearing and living out the good news inside a given context or culture. The dilemma is serious and relational damages are mounting for the church. Pagitt argues that a regular routine of this type of preaching "may well be an act of relational violence, one that is detrimental to the very communities we are seeking to nurture."[234] Putting it bluntly, states Pagitt, "speaching is failing to accomplish much of anything."[235] Furthermore, even though speaching may offer occasional value as a "way of delivering a broad message to a broad group of people," Pagitt holds that "it is not a sustainable means for building Christian communities who seek to live in harmony with God, each other, and the world."[236] Therefore, speaching (traditional preaching), which limits interaction with the body and thwarts communal avenues for edifying and building up the church, in the words of Pagitt, should "be used sparingly and abandoned as soon as possible."[237] If speaching, according to Pagitt, is the problem with preaching today, then what does he propose as the solution?

For Pagitt, the solution is simple; give the people, all people, a voice in the ongoing sermonic events of the community. The argument rests on the conviction that if God is at work in the lives of all the people among communities of faith, then it would be wise to include these voices in the sermon, rather than use preaching practices that limit what God is doing to a predetermined few.[238] God, argues Pagitt, has not given the message to a few "holders of truth," who, although they might be considered experts, still are limited by their own experiences and presuppositions.[239] Rather

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[233] Ibid., 152. Pagitt argues that postmoderns begin with their own story and experiences and that these must be integrated and given a voice in the equation in order for them to live into the story of God as followers of Jesus. See Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," 35.

[234] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 26.

[235] Ibid., 163.

[236] Ibid., 162. Pagitt does acknowledge that there are times when speaching is needed, but in order for the church to "maintain spiritual health, it should be a small part of the preaching repertoire, not the mainstay" (80).

[237] Ibid., 26.

[238] Ibid., 124.

[239] Ibid., 125–26.

than restrict God's voice to a chosen few—controlling the centralized message in the sermonic event—Pagitt insists the church embrace the beauty of living in a global, multiperspectival, pluralistic world by inviting each and every voice to have a say—recognizing together where and how God is at work. This approach will loosen the control on the message resulting in a broadened understanding of God through new and emerging messages.[240] For these new messages to come forth, a new mindset about preaching, accompanied by new practices that include everyone's voice, must be welcomed.[241]

So what does Pagitt call his solution to this speaching problem that welcomes everyone's voice?[242] Progressional dialogue (a phrase created by Pagitt) presents the term, which represents a deconstructed, then reconstructed, form of preaching for the emerging church in a postmodern culture.[243] Pagitt defines this method as preaching "where the content of the presentation is established in the context of a healthy relationship between the presenter and the listeners, and substantive changes in the content are then created as a result of this relationship."[244] Therefore, as stated above, new messages emerge as changes are integrated into the message based on the ongoing flow of contributions from participants in the sermon.

A primary focus of progressional dialogue is the role of the story in the lives of the audience.[245] This is not to be confused with narrative preaching that begins with the text or a story and then generically shares it with whoever attends.[246] Rather this preaching philosophy aims at getting participants to envision themselves as a

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[240] Ibid., 125. Pagitt notes that we would not have language that speaks of God as suffering servant or representing liberation theology if we were stuck with one view or understanding of God throughout history.

[241] Ibid., 80.

[242] Pagitt argues that *speaching* represents the new kid that came upon the homiletical horizon as a creation of the enlightenment. It is progressional dialogue, the communal approach that has always been in existence. See Ibid., 27–28.

[243] Ibid., 11

[244] Ibid., 23. For Pagitt the sermon emerges in collaboration with the community. This view also correlates with his view of truth, which Pagitt claims is "progressive, not regressive or zero sum." See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-imagined*, 137. Cf. Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," 36, for another definition of progressive dialogue. Here Pagitt says "the content of what's being preached is actually formed and shaped in relationship to the people who are there, so that it moves somewhere. So not only is it thoughtful of the people who are there, but the preaching changes in light of the contribution of the people who are a part of it."

[245] Ibid., 36.

[246] Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," 35.

part of the story itself.[247] It invites participants to ask, "'If this is our story, what will this mean for our lives?'"[248] Accomplishing this objective involves implementing inter-relational preaching where give and take by all participants, who are becoming a part of the story, happens as the people engage in the writing and telling of their story. Pagitt refers to this as *implicatory* preaching—where "implication is birthed in the dance between the story and the lives of the participants in that story."[249] Moving to an implicatory mindset might well be the most significant change needed in shifting from a speaching model to progressional dialogue, yet it is a necessary change if the church, according to Pagitt, is to develop a deep and meaningful ecclesiology by living out the story of God as a community of faith.[250]

This living out the story of faith, through integration in the preaching event, naturally lends itself to Pagitt's goal for progressional dialogue—creating a community of preachers. Pagitt's desire is to see the church "listen to the preachers among us, not just the preacher standing in front of us,"[251] which means "less time using one-way communication as our primary means of talking about and thinking about the gospel."[252] The communal act of dialogue fosters this vision and creates, according to Pagitt, healthy communities of faith primed for preaching *with* postmodern people.[253] Just how this progressional dialogue mentality is carried out in practice will now become the remaining priority of this chapter.

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[247] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, Ibid., 36. Pagitt believes the progressional approach invites the listener, who actually participates in the sermon, to ask the question, "If this is our story, what will this mean for our lives?"

[248] Ibid., 36. Or, "How do we become a part of this story or arrange our lives around it?" "Where do we find ourselves in this story?" "How does this incarnated story implicate me?"

[249] Ibid., 38. This method of incarnated story contrasts the traditional applicatory approach where Pagitt says "Application is born in the speacher who predetermines the main points with hopes of specific application."

[250] Ibid., 36.

[251] Ibid., 26. Pagitt believes God prompts, gifts, and calls some people to prepare for the teaching ministry within the church but this role is not to be to the exclusion of all others. He derives this view from the doctrine of the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9).

[252] Ibid.

[253] Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," 36.

Method

Homiletical method matters because the wrong method, speaching, appears to master God, sterilize His mysteries, and stifles communities of faith living into the full story of God.[254] This happens, argues Pagitt, when speaching—three-point packaged messages that explain away the mysteries of God's work and leaves no interplay for hearers to ask questions or give input—represents the primary preaching practice of the church.[255] Therefore, Pagitt rejects the traditional lecture method, derived from the enlightenment era, speech making, and/or the educational model, opting for a community wide-dialogical preaching practice.

This communal approach for the sermon and its delivery can be couched in two phases. First, a Bible discussion group meets during the week to participate in the crafting of the sermon.[256] Conversation develops, upon the establishing and reading of a selected text, around issues raised, confusing or difficult elements, and identifying what the text says about their role in God's story.[257] What emerges from these Tuesday evening gatherings is the actual form, feel, and content for the sermon on the proceeding Sunday worship.[258]

The second phase involves the actual sermon event or delivery of the message. The weekly message is delivered as a roundtable discussion with a big-table feel.[259] Pagitt describes the flow of this type of preaching event as him talking for a while and

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[254] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 43. Pagitt argues that modern day preaching that presents truth as if it has all the answers sends a message that God can be mastered.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Ibid., 107.

[257] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 113. Cf. also Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 188, where he describes this meeting in this manner: "I give a bit of context to what we're doing. I say we aren't meeting to study the Bible but to enter into discussion with it and with one another and that the content of our discussion will be carried over to a coming Sunday in a larger conversation during our worship gathering." This part of the preparation process is also referred to as time between the pastor and the community verses only time between the pastor and a commentary (189).

[258] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 115. Time spent being a part of the lives of the congregation in preparing a message is time well spent for Pagitt. Contrarily, dropping 20 hours to work on sermon design issues such as an introduction or fine tuning a particular point or issue seems outrageous to him. See Pagitt, "Preaching as Dialogue," 38.

[259] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 207. A typical roundtable discussion would involve the following: first, hearing the story read; second, the preacher contributes to the conversation through a monologue; and last, the floor is opened to receive responses from others. See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-imagined*, 225–26. For resources on roundtable preaching, see Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1997) and John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching* Meet (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

then he "invites others to share their ideas, input, and thoughts about what's been said."[260] This integrated format frees Pagitt from the pressures of being the "'Bible Answer man,'" by decentralizing the authority for preaching the scriptures.[261] Pagitt states, in referring to Solomon's Porch's homiletical round table aim, that "no one person has a privileged place to speak about God in our community over anyone else."[262] He continues, since "everyone has the right to speak for God, then we should try to level the structure of the playing field as much as possible so that can happen."[263] This approach does not completely diminish Pagitt's role in the message, but it does lessen preaching's priority in the service and unbuckles Pagitt from the "pacesetter" position, which enables him to practice his faith as one voice in the community—not the only voice.[264]

Being one voice among many may ease the burden of delivering the sermon, yet this does not negate the preacher's significant role in helping facilitate and create the proper environment for spiritual formation through dialogue. Pagitt even argues that it is hard work, harder than "delivering a well-crafted message."[265] So what is the preacher's role in delivering a message in progressional dialogue style?

Implementing a progressional methodology incorporates a number of items. First, the preacher has a responsibility to set the parameters for the sermonic conversation. This takes place through the message delivered by placing, raising, and holding a topic of discussion in the minds of the listener—an idea that has a "legitimate possibility."[266] If the preacher has done his or her job, argues Pagitt, then when dialogue invites are given, people will be "thinking and talking about faith issues in a new way" leading to new conclusions.[267] Second, the preacher must present an appropriate posture for preaching. An attitude of authenticity, transparency, and vulnerability is required—no "I'm the expert"

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[260] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 24.
[261] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 130.
[262] Doug Pagitt, quoted in AllenCKm, "*Spiritual Revolution*."
[263] Ibid.
[264] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 130–31.
[265] Ibid., 125.
[266] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 199.
[267] Ibid.

mentality allowed.[268] Third, so as not to deter connectedness with the audience, the right tone of voice must be established.[269]

The fourth and fifth items for developing a progressional methodology include developing an art for improvisation and ditching sermon notes. Improvisation allows for spontaneous and unplanned conversation. Preaching without notes encourages fluidity and openness of such participation.[270] Item number six addresses authority in preaching. Pagitt argues that "the beauty of progressional dialogue is that it returns the ownership of the Christian perspective to the body of Christ, the people who truly are the church."[271] Authority resides with the people, not in a person. The final item, closely tied to the right posture, entails the use of provisional language to encourage interaction from listeners. Framing sermon ideas/statements with openers such as "'It seems to me'" or "'This is my take on it'" or "'From the perspective I have'" will aid in fostering open discussion.[272] Pagitt encourages pastors to develop this skill because of its undeniable value in creating conversation among the community of faith. Implementing these six items, if not more, can be challenging in helping create quality dialogue, yet extremely rewarding, argues Pagitt, in developing healthy communities of faith through preaching.

Creating mature communities of faith should be the ultimate aim of any chosen homiletical method. This is Pagitt's goal and driving *pathos* for developing and implementing a methodology for progressional dialogue. He strongly desires for both pastors and parishioners to embrace, through this approach to preaching, "the opportunity to change, refine, and reframe our ideas about God and our lives as God's people."[273] He sees this as being the true church—a holistic, communal, Christian community that is entering into as well as living out the continuation of God's story "from Abraham to Jesus to today."[274]

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[268] Ibid., 198.
[269] Ibid., 205–6.
[270] Ibid., 180–84, 186.
[271] Ibid., 138.
[272] Ibid., 200.
[273] Ibid., 24.
[274] Ibid., 244.

Conclusion

This completes a review of Pagitt's message, mentality, and method for preaching within the emerging church. The intent has been to provide a careful investigation of his homiletical convictions taken from his own writings, sermons, and personal observations by this author. The following remarks present a recap of these findings.

The message section provided an inquiry into Pagitt's beliefs about the Bible and the core of the gospel. Beginning with Scripture, his progressive ideology unveiled interwoven convictions for and concerns against certain views about the Bible. His convictions in favor of Scripture presented the Bible as a living member of his community of faith where its value, authority, and power is in community as the people actively engage with the story of Scripture, in context, while living out their own story of God. His convictions against certain views of the Bible included using the Bible as a bully book, encyclopedia full of truth, playbook for memorization, or seen as a book without imperfections.

The gospel message for Pagitt offers a deconstructed, re-imagined message that departs considerably from orthodox distinctives. Original sin and the fall are denied, God as judge is rejected, and Jesus as Savior from sin and God's wrath is dismissed. The replacement or rediscovered gospel sees humanity in uninterrupted connectedness with God as personal friend and Jesus as man's guide to living, loving, and partnering with God for the betterment and healing of the world.

The mentality section contrasted two philosophies about preaching. First, seen as the problem, Pagitt disdains traditional preaching, which he labels as speaching. Speaching provides no space for community integration and thus presents a significant, if not damaging, relationship problem. Second, the solution, called progressional dialogue, centers on giving the people a voice in the entire sermonic event, which allows for integration and implication of both the story of the Bible and the community of faith.

Pagitt's preaching methods presented the last homiletical category for examination. His communal mentality is partnered well with his methodology, which involves two stages. First, the community of faith participates in the pre-sermon preparation time with the text, and second, the gathered community engages with the sermon during its delivery so that the content, implications, and any

necessary changes, are fleshed out, discovered, and shared together as a collective body or voice. The messenger, facilitator, or preacher's role in this communal event remains vital as he or she sets the stage for conversation by raising the topic for discussion, holding the right posture and tone of voice, improvising when necessary, and using provisional language, all aimed at giving the body their rightful authoritative voice in the sermon.

This concludes assessing Pagitt's contrarian voice toward traditional preaching. Critiquing his homiletical message, mentality, and method in light of Scripture will come later in this work. For now, its time to turn to one of Pagitt's friends, who presents less of an oppositional tone toward traditional preaching by offering a softer, more whimsical homiletical voice.

CHAPTER 6
DAN KIMBALL: VINTAGE PREACHING

Message

The message (theology) matters to Kimball, for he believes it is what drives every aspect of the church. In *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches* he states this conviction, "Absolutely everything we do in the church is a reflection of what we believe theologically, whether we are consciously aware of it or not."[1] He concludes, "This is a very serious thing to recognize."[2] Kimball's solemn commitment to the right message and/or theology, both for himself and the emerging church, presents two sides. First, his message holds firm to vintage theology of the Nicene Creed.[3] Second, he equally welcomes the adventure of exploring and rethinking theology for today—seeing it as a strength, not a weakness.[4] Assessing just how Kimball balances his message within these two positions, the message of old and the message of today's emerging/postmodern church, in relation to Scripture and the gospel, will be the aim of this section.

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[1] Dan Kimball, "The Emerging Church and Missional Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 103.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid, 83–105. Throughout these pages Kimball repeatedly appeals to the Nicene Creed as reflecting his core doctrinal beliefs. The core doctrines found in the Nicene Creed, according to Kimball, "apply in any culture of any time period" (92). Cf. Dan Kimball, "Humble Theology: Re-exploring Doctrine While Holding On to Truth," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (eds., Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 215–16.

[4] Dan Kimball, "Humble Theology," 221. The following quote from Kimball reflects the two positions mentioned above. He writes, "Although I do have specific core and fundamental beliefs that I hold to, I also appreciate the diversity of beliefs that Christians have. I strive to be open to listening and exploring all types of theological thinking." Additionally he states on this subject, "I believe true emerging churches must go deep within, and from the inside out, rethink, reshape, and revalue how we go about everything as culture changes"—this includes, "our mindset about theology." See Kimball, "Missional Theology," 86.

What is the Bible to Kimball? Beginning with what it is not, Kimball maintains a mantra that closely resonates with McLaren and Pagitt.[5] He disdains the misuse of the Bible when viewed as an answer-everything book, the ultimate how-to manual, textbook, or auto manual, where problems and solutions are neatly packaged.[6] The angst resides in the mishandling of the Bible (proof-texting) and the fact that so few confessing Christians question or wrestle with what the Bible actually teaches in context.[7] Many Christians are simply satisfied with "wrapped-up, tidy, black-and-white-answers," often derived from Scripture taken out of context, when, argues Kimball, "The issues are far more complex."[8] Having loosened his grip on the need to hold tightly to some previously held, concise, theological answers, Kimball now welcomes more mystery, wonder, and awe in his message realizing there are some things of which Christians cannot be as certain.[9]

Despite Kimball's adventuresome and mysterious interpretive edge, he nevertheless has fundamental convictions about Scripture and doctrine.[10] Three basic reasons he believes strongly in the Bible are as follows: first, the teachings of Jesus place

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[5] As documented in chapters 4 and 5, both McLaren and Pagitt use identical terminology in describing their scorn for this approach to Scripture.

[6] Kimball, "Missional Theology," 94–95.

[7] Kimball's observation of the Christian subculture discovered a lack of theological questioning about the preacher's message. Proclamations from the pulpit that often dealt with a complex issue by quoting a verse or two and then pronouncing case closed is what he found to be the norm—A *Berean* mindset (Acts 17:11) was missing. Church members simply accepted whatever was proclaimed, which was typically derived from the pastor's systematic theology seminary text book. Kimball longs for a church of theologians where theology means being "missional in engaging culture and exploring the questions of the day." Ibid. 89–90.

[8] Ibid., 90.

[9] Ibid., 91. Kimball writes that as he grew in his faith and became exposed to a variety of orthodox positions (on nonfoundational issues) within church history that he "began realizing that maybe some of our neat, clean, and packaged theology is actually more messy and complex than we like to admit." As a result he has become more "open to listening and exploring all types of theological thinking," which has only led him to "dig deeper" in Scripture. See Kimball, "Humble Theology," 220–21.

[10] Kimball even refers to himself as a fundamentalist, but only if the term is appropriately defined. Five fundamentals of the faith that he adheres to can be drawn from the 1910 Presbyterian General Assembly meeting, which declared verbal inspiration of Scripture, the divinity of Jesus, His virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection and future return as five fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith. What he does not adhere to is the fundamentalist subculture that is prevalent today that has added to the initial five point list with definitive views on women in ministry, end times, creation/evolution debate, dress codes, alcohol, and politics, etc. See Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 188–91.

a high value on Scripture;[11] second, Scripture testifies within its pages its importance to knowing and loving God;[12] and third, Scripture is inspired by God.[13] For these reasons Kimball clings to Scripture as his authority and guide for life and desires to see a greater prominence and hunger for God's Word to develop within the emerging church. [14] He writes, "I believe we need to be teaching the Bible in the emerging church with depth and zeal, saturating our churches with Scriptures in everything we do."[15] Ultimately Kimball longs to see people embrace and fall in love with Scripture, not for how-to helps for a better life, but rather for spiritual transformation, not just information, that leads to loving and worshipping God.[16]

If metaphors could capture Kimball's view of Scripture, then two would be most prominent. First, a "compass" represents Kimball's understanding of how Scripture is to be a light, source, or guide for Christians.[17] The Bible seen in this way provides him space to allow mystery in the equation. Kimball writes,

> A compass gives direction but doesn't go into specifics. I see the Bible as a spiritually-inspired compass, where it gives us strong direction and even gives specifics about many things. But at the same time, there are some topics and things we wish we could have specific answers to, but

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[11] Kimball believes genuine disciples of Jesus will model themselves after Him. Jesus' life pattern revealed significant value placed on Scripture. Jesus, according to Kimball, read, quoted, and taught Scripture. See Kimball, "Missional Theology," 95–96.

[12] Kimball understands the role of Scripture as producing faith, helping with temptation, nourishing and guiding believers, teaching wisdom, and providing spiritual insight. Scripture plays a key role in spiritual formation—leading to knowing and loving God. Ibid., 96.

[13] Kimball defines inspiration in the following terms, "When I say I believe in inspiration of Scriptures, I am saying I believe in God's superintending of the human authors of the Bible by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16), allowing them to use their individual personalities and writing styles to compose the Bible. So exactly what God wanted in the original manuscripts is what is included in them. See Kimball, *They Like Jesus, but Not the Church*, 189. Cf. Kimball, "Missional Theology," 96. Kimball instructs pastors to teach the trustworthiness of Scripture. He writes, "How refreshing it is to emerging generations, floating in relativism, to hear that they can intellectually trust and believe in God's inspired Scriptures." See Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 182.

[14] Based on his conviction of inspiration, Kimball asserts that "I can say I have a fundamental belief that the Scriptures are God-breathed, fully inspired, and an authority and a guide for us." See Kimball, *They Like Jesus, but Not the Church*, 189. Kimball also speaks of Scriptural authority in terms of the Spirit of God working through the Word to "renew my mind, my heart, my life, and to help me walk in the ways of Jesus." See Kimball, "Missional Theology," 97.

[15] Kimball, "Missional Theology," 96–97.

[16] Ibid., 97.

[17] Ibid., 96.

> they remain more of a mystery. It gives direction rather than acting as a how-to-answer book.[18]

He concludes this thought by claiming the Bible does give sufficient direction for keeping Christians from getting lost. It also provides enough guidance, no matter the cultural setting, or time period, to enable them to choose and travel the right path.[19]

The Bible as an "anchor" presents the second metaphor.[20] Like being in an anchored boat that has the capacity to still drift, but only so far, the Bible keeps Christians tethered to a set of immoveable or unchanging core beliefs, all the while allowing some drifting and/or diversity of beliefs in areas of non-essentials, or in relation to changing cultures.[21] Regardless of which descriptive metaphor is used, the purpose for Scripture remains the same for Kimball. He seeks to engage and immerse the emerging church into Scripture for life-change, not mere head knowledge, which comes as a result of simple obedience to the Word (John 14:23).[22]

How does Kimball balance a hermeneutic that allows for the message to drift among varied interpretations and shifts in culture while also remaining fixed to fundamentals of the faith?[23] His solution to this delicate and complex interpretive quagmire is to approach Scripture from two vantage points—humility and narrative lenses. A hermeneutic of humility acknowledges the potential for human error in interpretation. Sin, personal bias, and diverse cultural backgrounds can lead to misguided or heretical interpretations.[24] An interpretive humility, which acknowledges the potential for mistakes, helps guard against arrogant conclusions that

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 97.

[21] This statement is not to imply that anything goes theologically for Kimball. As previously stated, Kimball does have core orthodox convictions to which he holds. He states, "As a church, we could be called a Nicene Creed church in terms of our beliefs." Yet, he does realize that some of his theological views/messages have changed over time. Therefore, for Kimball, "Theology is a living, relationally dynamic thing—it is not stagnant." See Kimball, "Humble Theology," 216.

[22] Kimball, "Missional Theology," 97.

[23] Hermeneutics matters to Kimball. He offers biblical hermeneutic classes at Vintage Faith Church so people can learn how to "distinguish between the literal and parables, metaphors, hyperbole, and other figures of speech." He places a high value on teaching the origin of the Bible and helping others understand how to interpret the various genres of the Scripture. Kimball holds to a grammatical, historical, and theological investigation of the text. See Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, 201–2.

[24] Kimball, "Humble Theology," 223. Cf. Kimball, "Missional Theology," 99.

leave no room for questioning and dialogue.[25] Kimball likens the potential problem to someone believing in *sola Scriptura* when what the person actually means is "Sola-the-way-I-interpret-the-Scriptura."[26] Humility allows room for floating while remaining anchored to truth.[27]

Seeing Scripture through narrative lenses provides the preacher an interpretive vantage point that places him within the story—seeking to understand the cultural context and historical setting of the text.[28] Capturing the flow and feel of the big story honors the Scripture in how it was given, which was not a "math puzzle, science manual, or how-to-have-a-happy-life manual."[29] The holding on to biblical essentials while allowing room for mystery and the beauty of story represents Kimball's hermeneutic of choice. He believes in a hermeneutic that cherishes digging into the text to affirm the essentials of the faith, as represented by the Nicene Creed, but also welcomes change and flexibility in the story concerning contemporary cultural challenges. Just how Kimball incorporates this humble, narrative hermeneutic for interpreting the gospel message, will now become the focus of the remainder of this section.

The Gospel

What is the gospel to Kimball? The "pure" gospel for Kimball is captured in the Apostle Paul's writing to the church of Corinth (1 Cor 15:3–4).[30] He believes that what Paul claims about the work of Jesus, his death, burial, and resurrection, represents the core of the good news—a "Jesus-centered gospel that changes and transforms us."[31] Despite the message being good news, Kimball realizes that not everyone will embrace it as such. The radical nature of the

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[25] Kimball opposes an attitude of "my doctrinal statement can beat up your doctrinal statement." He finds it interesting how Christians can maintain a "defend and attack" attitude when it comes to certain biblical convictions. If, as the Bible purports, man is sinful, then, asks Kimball, "How can we be so darn certain that our particular interpretation of the Scriptures and our theological positions are the absolutely correct ones?" See Kimball, "Humble Theology," 221–22.

[26] Kimball, "Missional Theology," 98.

[27] Ibid. Kimball writes, "As we hold to our 'anchor,' I want to remember that there is room to float without letting go of the anchor."

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, 237.

[31] Ibid.

message, which "entails faith in the risen Jesus (Rom 10:9), the denial of self (Luke 9:23), and repentance to align with God's will (Acts 3:19)," will be a stumbling block for some and many will outright reject it.[32]

A central or stand-out facet of Jesus' work at Calvary, according to Kimball, which has been rejected and/or severely questioned by some within the emerging church, is substitutionary atonement.[33] Despite the unpleasantness of pondering Jesus dying and shedding His blood to pay for sin, Kimball holds to this teaching as truth because of its repeated emphasis in Scripture. Even though this truth still remains a mystery, he rejoices "in the salvation that comes from the blood that was shed as payment on the cross."[34] In keeping with Scripture and the Nicene Creed, Kimball holds to salvation alone through the finished substitutionary work of Jesus; a divine act that requires no human work or religious effort.[35]

While Kimball's gospel message remains fixed to Scripture and the Nicene Creed—echoing 1 Cor 15:3–4, he nevertheless believes there is more to the good news story represented in the Bible than what is being proclaimed in this emerging culture. If the good news stays relegated to only the atonement and the promise of heaven in the afterlife, then the call to live life today, as a follower of Jesus, for the present kingdom of Jesus, will be missed.[36] Thus, Kimball's message seeks to balance the gospel with a more holistic perspective that incorporates what the good news does in people's lives as they live and practice being a disciple of Christ in the here and now.[37]

Two similes, referenced by Kimball, help explain what holistic gospel living should be like. First, living out the gospel is to be like a marriage, not a marriage certificate. And second, the good news life is like a driver's license, not a birth certificate.[38] The gospel, more than just a position of assurance with God, also

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[32] Ibid., 238.

[33] Kimball, "Missional Theology," 100.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 101. Cf. Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, 237.

[37] Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, 237.

[38] Ibid., 237. The similes were mentioned in a work by Scot McKnight, "What Is the Gospel?" Next-Wave, n.p. [cited 5 Dec. 2005]. Online: http://the-next-wave-ezine.info/issue85/index.cfm?id=8&ref=ARTICLE%5FTHE%20BEST%20OF%202005%5F140.

presents "an invitation into a beautiful relationship with God that gives us the privilege of participating with him in loving others and making a difference on earth," a message, argues Kimball, which "people today can relate to."[39] Therefore, the gospel message for Kimball represents a holistic Jesus, one who offers salvation and calls believers to kingdom living as His friend, because of his love for us, but also as the King of Kings that everyone must respect and submit to as Lord, recognizing His eminent return as judge and ruler of the universe.[40]

This two part gospel message for Kimball keeps Jesus at the center. Jesus, he remarks, is to be the "ultimate focus of your sermons" with the aim being changed lives, living as true ambassadors for Him (2 Cor 5:20).[41] How Kimball communicates this gospel message, by examining his preaching philosophy and methodology, will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Mentality

Kimball's philosophy of preaching places an importance on the person of the preacher.[42] Referring to the preacher *ethos* of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 2:1–5), as the "ultimate model for preaching," Kimball embraces both humility and dependence as crucial characteristics for vintage preaching within the emerging church.[43] A preacher's character that does not reflect his preaching—walking with Jesus in fear, trembling, and weakness—or a preacher's attitude that exudes a pompous, know-it-all spirit, will not be acceptable to emerging generations.[44] It is the preacher's life, says Kimball that will ultimately "preach better than anything we can say." For people of the emerging culture "look at our hearts more

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[39] Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, 238.

[40] Kimball, "Missional Theology," 101.

[41] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 174. Kimball writes, commenting on gathered worship, "Worship in the emerging church is less about looking out for what is on the cutting edge and more about moving back into our spiritual center with Jesus as our sole focus" (169).

[42] Ibid., 195–6.

[43] Ibid. Humility acknowledges the preacher's insufficiency and God's all sufficiency to accomplish what His Spirit desires, while dependence expresses reliance upon God evidenced by the discipline of prayer.

[44] Ibid. 195. Sometimes the know-it-all spirit comes through in the church when people are not permitted to ask questions or when wrestling with theological issues places you under suspicion. See Kimball, "Missional Theology," 90. Kimball claims, "I have heard such stinky, stinky attitudes from people who nail down their theological beliefs with such certainty that there is an 'everyone else is wrong but us' attitude" (98).

than at the words we speak."[45] Who you are as a person within the emerging culture, believes Kimball, affects who you are as a preacher.

An image that might reflect these two personal preaching traits of Kimball's comes from his predictable routine prior to the preaching event. Before each sermon he retreats to a private room to pray where he paces in circles, raises his arms in the air, and calls upon the Lord. He describes his prayer in this manner, "Lord, I surrender everything to you. I cannot do this without you. May your Spirit speak through me. Your will, not mine. I cannot do this without you, please speak through me."[46] Kimball claims he cannot preach without this full surrender to the Spirit of God, acknowledging, "The Spirit is the true source of preaching that has power."[47] The divine power that comes from above is the power Kimball believes is needed to minister among the challenges of preaching within the context of an emerging culture.

Picturing Kimball's prayerful dependence on God as a part of the preaching event sheds light on the value he assigns to the preaching task.[48] Preaching, he writes, "Is a central and critical part of our mission, and we cannot push it to the sidelines in the emerging church."[49] Rather, Kimball, treasuring the instructions of Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:13), calls forth the emerging church to "elevate public reading, preaching, and teaching"—for he sees an even greater need for preaching today in light of "a culture void of truth and lacking understanding of the Scriptural story."[50] Postmoderns just like moderns, or any generation that has come

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[45] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 195. Kimball writes, "The fact that our hearts are broken over those who don't know Jesus will preach far more loudly than our words." Kimball understands preaching to incorporate every aspect of his life. He writes, "Preaching in the emerging church involves our hearts, marriages, singleness, families, friends, creativity, speech, attitudes, bodies, actions, jokes, whispers, shouts, glances, secrets, thoughts, and yes, our sermons too" (194).

[46] Ibid., 196.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Kimball refers to the words of E.M. Bounds as the "key to vintage preaching for the emerging church." Ibid., 196. The words quoted from E.M. Bounds are as follows, "The preacher must pre-eminently be a man of prayer. His heart must graduate in the school of prayer. In the school of prayer only can the heart learn to preach. No learning can make up for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, no gifts will supply its lack." See E.M Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1946), 26.

[49] Ibid., 173. Additionally Kimball remarks, "Preaching is more important and holier than ever as we exercise the sacred privilege of opening the Scriptures and teaching the divine story of God to people who are hearing it for the very first time. Woe to us if we take this incredible privilege lightly" (182).

[50] Ibid.

before, needs preaching; therefore, Kimball devotes himself faithfully to this task.

Though the need for preaching does not change, Kimball believes that the preacher's mentality about preaching must remain flexible and fluid in order to connect with or adapt to the ever changing culture (modern to postmodern or post-Christian context).[51] Kimball seeks to maintain this open mindset—specifically in relation to homiletical methodology. Like Paul's approach at Athens (Acts 17:16–32), different world-views will mean different starting points for proclamation.[52] The starting point for the postmodern or emerging culture, according to Kimball, is not the middle of the story, but rather it is the beginning—for most of them do not know the biblical story.[53]

It is for this reason, like Paul's encounter with the Athenian's in his day (Acts 17:16–32), that Kimball believes the telling of the "grand narrative of the biblical story" is essential to connecting and reaching today's emerging culture with the gospel.[54] Kimball describes his approach as follows, "What I try to do, in a narrative sense, is to be constantly piecing in where what we're talking about fits in with the grand narrative of the biblical story."[55] This grand narrative does not start with Paul, but rather with the "grand story of God," as revealed in Genesis, "who created everything."[56] Emerging church preachers, then, must become "story tellers again."[57] This meta-narrative mentality has in one

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[51] Dan Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball" in Michael Duduit, ed., *Preaching with Power: Dynamic Insights From Twenty Top Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 50. Kimball stresses the importance of *exegeting* the culture in order to know how to connect to emerging generations realizing that the vast majority of people do not have a Christian worldview. Kimball believes that understanding the beliefs of others provides the needed starting point to then move to the biblical story. Cf. Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 177, where he argues that the "first big challenge in preaching to emerging generations is to regain our voice by earning the trust of our hearers." This, insists Kimball, must come through building relationships with those outside the church—overcoming the negative stereotypes and Christian sub-culture realities that exist.

[52] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 175–76.

[53] Ibid., 172. Cf. Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*, 15, where he writes, "In our increasingly post-Christian culture, the influences and values shaping emerging generations are no longer aligned with Christianity. Emerging generations don't have a basic understanding of the story of the Bible, and they don't have one God as the predominant God to worship."

[54] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 92.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 176.

[57] Ibid., 172. One of the problems with preaching to a post-Christian era (when preachers begin in the middle of the story), asserts Kimball, is that "we offer them escape from a peril they don't know they face, and we use words that either aren't part of their vocabulary or that they don't correctly understand." People in the emerging culture simply do not know the story, insists Kimball. Therefore, this is the catalyst behind the call for preachers to become story-tellers once again.

sense become the definition of preaching for Kimball. Preaching, he claims, is telling "The Story." He writes, "Preaching is 'proclaiming' the story of God and humans, the good news of the kingdom."[58] For Kimball, preaching as story-telling is not a minor initiative for the emerging church, but rather a central component of his homiletical mindset.

Another central facet to Kimball's preaching philosophy involves accommodating the mindset of the postmodern listener.[59] Fortunately postmoderns dig theology. Digging deeper into the text, believes Kimball, represents the desire of the majority, not the minority, of those in the emerging church. He insists they are "starving for depth in our teaching and preaching" implying they will not swallow shallow responses to the challenges of life or superficial explanations about hell, trustworthiness of the Bible, human sexuality, or the exclusive way of salvation through Jesus Christ.[60]

Kimball's desire to meet this need for biblical substance has led to an increase in his sermon preparation time. He has found himself "studying all the harder" in order to not "water things down."[61] He compares it to teaching a class on theology, noting that his preaching dwells on key word studies, and involves spending significant time with the historical context.[62] Providing this greater depth in the Scriptures also requires more time for delivery of the message. A preaching philosophy that insists on limiting the message to twenty-minute quickies will not, says Kimball, enable the preacher to "tell the complete story from Genesis to Revelation."[63] Biblical substance takes time to deliver. The emerging

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[58] Ibid., 173.

[59] Kimball takes a "haircut-homiletics class" biweekly to learn "how members of a post-Christian generation view the world, biblical topics, church, and Christians." He states that this class (interaction with a hair stylist from a local salon that represents today's culture) "has really given me more practical insight on preaching and communicating than any seminary class I have ever taken." He strongly encourages preachers to have ongoing relationships with those outside the church if they seriously desire to understand those they hope to reach with the gospel. Ibid., 174.

[60] Ibid., 182.

[61] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 86. One of Kimball's assumptions for anyone preaching to emerging generations includes a prayerful and careful *exegeting* of the Scriptures "to accurately communicate their meaning." He writes, "More than ever, we need to "correctly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). See Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 174. See appendix 1 for Kimball's preaching assumptions for the emerging church.

[62] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 86.

[63] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 179. Kimball typically preaches between thirty to forty-five minutes. See Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 86. His longest message is one hour and

generation will set aside enough time if the preacher has something of value to say. Drive-by sermons with a few bullet verses will not suffice.

Providing this more in-depth preaching of God's Word has shifted Kimball away from what he might consider a more modernistic approach to homiletics. He claims he has had to ditch most of his homiletical instruction received in seminary—"the breaking preaching down into an academic outline" such as "point 1a, point 2b," which is often framed in acronyms.[64] This approach, he argues, may be effective for some, but not for the context of an emerging culture. Postmoderns will often compare this type of preaching to a self-help Tony Robbins presentation, a cross between a pep rally and a business presentation, or a lecture—none of which helps them to connect with God.[65] The challenge Kimball sees with today's preaching typically involves two fronts. First, a preacher can go so far in being academic and historical that he ends up providing no present day value. Second, a preacher can be so "felt-need" and application driven that the message falls short of meaningful content and historical context.[66] Kimball strives for a balance between the two while not losing sight of his need to connect it all to the big story.

Kimball's proposed solution to the modernistic, propositional, *fill-in-the-blank* approach to preaching focuses on a call for theocentric preaching, which welcomes a shift away from the anthropocentric focus often seen in modern seeker-sensitive churches.[67] Having all the right theological answers (turning

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nine minutes. See Dan Kimball, "An Hour Long Sermon," *Vintage Faith Blog*, n.p. [cited 16 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.vintagefaith.org.

[64] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 90.

[65] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 185.

[66] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 90. Kimball describes his frustration in uncovering that many "conservative evangelical Christians were more concerned with the pragmatic felt-need answers to problems in life, than they were in thinking about theology behind the felt-needs tips they were given." Tidy answers, backed up with two to three verses, about life's problems did not settle well with Kimball. Not that he despises preaching that has strong applicational value for daily living. However, in being a missionary to culture he discovered that this type of preaching/teaching was not cutting it for those outside the church who were "asking deeper theological questions than were people inside the church." Kimball has found that the more he engages with the emerging culture the less his preaching can "give the packaged and somewhat simplistic answers you could get away with within the church subculture." See Kimball, "Missional Theology," 90–91.

[67] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 178. Kimball recognizes the value of felt-need preaching but, he says, "In many cases, unfortunately, we've made ourselves, rather than God, the focus of our preaching. We gather on Sundays to learn how we can have a happy family, how we can have our finances right, how we can live a peaceful life, or how we can have a better marriage."

theology into mathematics) squelches the authenticity of the preaching event and can stifle the celebration of the mystery of God.[68] Postmoderns, Kimball claims, "hunger for a deep experience of God's wisdom," which means do not skimp on serious teaching but rather aim for going deeper.[69]

Defining words and changing Christian sub-culture terminology represents two ways Kimball works at going deeper in theology within the emerging culture. These two traits help the emerging generation better understand themselves, the culture, and the Scripture. Kimball has discovered the need to examine, not assume, people's understanding or definition of key terms. He realizes that far too often you could assume you are talking about the same thing with someone and find out later, based on their definition of the term, that you were speaking about different things. Thus, he seeks to define terms such as the church, the gospel, fundamentalist, missional, evangelical, and Jesus, when preaching.[70]

Changing terminology as part of the preaching event helps teach and redefine what the emerging church stands for or believes. Deconstructing phrases like "I go to church" is reconstructed with words such as "When the church gathers on Sunday."[71] It may be subtle, but words matter and Kimball strategically chooses his words to send a specific message. The church, for example, is not something you go to, Christians are the church. Kimball writes, "The church really needs to see itself as the people of God on a mission, not as a building or a weekly meeting. We don't go to church; we are the church."[72] Kimball and practitioners within the emerging church strive to help communicate the church being the missional body in culture, not a place you gather for two hours on Sunday.[73] Preaching with a reconstructive mindset toward these

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid. Kimball's Church, Vintage Faith, offers a seven week theology course, which handles biblical topics such as: anthropology, harmatiology, christology, pneumatology, soterilogoy, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

[70] Dan Kimball, "The Importance of Definitions," *Vintage Faith Blog*, n.p. [cited 28 Feb. 2008]. Online: http//www.vintagefaith.com. When preaching on Romans 6–8, Kimball remarks, "I felt like I was teaching an English class, because I walked the audience through the definitions of sanctification, condemnation, imputed righteousness, and other terms." See Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 179.

[71] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 84.

[72] Dan Kimball, "The Stained Class Perspective," in *Practitioners: Voices within the Emerging Church* (ed. Greg Russinger and Alex Field; Ventura: Regal, 2005), 208.

[73] Ibid., 197.

types of Christian sub-culture clichés and ideas is an important element to Kimball's homiletical philosophy and the emerging church in general.

Leading the emerging church and challenging the emerging culture to go deeper in Scripture requires dialogue. Kimball has discovered that the emerging generation learns by interaction, which will require more than sit and listen lectures that at times are delivered in kindergarten fashion.[74] The emerging generation, according to Kimball's research, views traditional preaching in this way, "'Christianity from preachers is a one way thing. They don't care what I think; all they care about is dispensing their information and forcing their belief on me, not caring what I am personally believing at this time or wanting to dialogue and interact with me.'"[75] To overcome their negative preconceived notions of preachers and the preaching event, which to them usually entails a misuse of power and authority and a learning format where mindless people sit, listen, and take (without challenge) whatever is delivered to them, there will need to be a change in preaching philosophy among preachers seeking to be missional to an emerging culture.[76] A new homiletical mentality will be needed that encompasses ways to engage in two-way communication—if not in large group settings then at least in other venues.

Creativity represents the final aspect of Kimball's preaching philosophy. His passion is to "communicate Jesus and the Scriptures in a creative way to a world that's asking questions, seeking and looking."[77] Exactly how Kimball practices this (methods), along with his other ideas about preaching, will be the remaining priority of this chapter.

Method

Kimball's aim in preaching is changed lives and changed lives will come as a result of a change in homiletical methods.[78] The reason

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[74] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 91.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Kimball, "The Stained Class Perspective," 208.

[78] This statement is not meant to undermine Kimball's conviction and reliance on the Spirit of God to draw people to Jesus. See Kimball, "Missional Theology," 101. Cf. Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 187, where he acknowledges the Spirit's role in salvation/sanctification. He writes, "Of course, no matter how we teach or preach, it is the Spirit of God who does the convicting (John

for this needed change, claims Kimball, is because the "audience has changed."[79] Living in the context of an emerging generation means that there exist different audiences with different worldviews that will need a different methodology in order to connect with them on behalf of the gospel.[80] Therefore, this section will seek to identify three primary features of Kimball's methodology for preaching in a postmodern/post-Christian context.

Theotopical preaching, which consists of a blend of expository and topical preaching, represents the first feature.[81] Combining these two homiletical methods requires the preacher to be responsible in *exegeting* the "Scriptures to accurately communicate their meaning" while simultaneously embracing the opportunity to "shape a theological worldview for people by telling the story."[82] Imperative to this method is having a precisely defined theological concept that can be understood and explained by how it fits into the grand story of the Bible.[83] This central theme, according to Kimball, "brings us into God's story of how he is moving throughout history in our lives today."[84] Thus, for Kimball, a narrative methodology is not so much the telling of a story, but rather a blending of propositional truths (honoring historical context) with the meta-narrative picture all woven together by a Scripture theme. The aim with this methodology, writes Kimball, is "post-Christian listeners" seeing "the world through a theological, big-picture, scriptural lens."[85]

16:8) and guides people to all truth (John (16:23). But our job is to take into consideration how we present truth to the people we hope to see transformed."

[79] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 173. Kimball provides a comparative analysis (employing some hyperbole) on assumptions about how to preach to a modern and to a post-Christian audience. See appendix 2.

[80] Ibid., 173–74.

[81] Ibid., 188.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid. Some examples include the following: A teaching on the Christmas narrative where the goal was to theologically reveal how each person of the Godhead was a part of the Christmas narrative; a teaching on dating that included both sanctification and the Genesis story on how man and woman were created in God's image.

[84] Ibid., 122.

[85] Ibid., 180. *Theotopical* messages or topics that Kimball recommends addressing include the following: preaching that addresses kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus; Jesus as the only way to God; God's perspective on human sexuality; redefining marriage and family to new generations; hell; and the trustworthiness of Scripture. Ibid., 180–81. The actual delivery of these *theotopical* messages will often encompass a verse-by-verse approach to teaching. See Kimball, *Preaching in the Emerging Church*, 84.

A second feature of Kimball's preaching methodology involves audience participation.[86] Participation, the act of interactive, multi-sensory involvement with the sermonic event by the listeners actually shares the stage with the preacher and his message.[87] Instead of the focal point of the gathered worship time being solely centered on the messenger and the message preached, both elements are incorporated to create a holistic teaching experience around the designated biblical theme.[88] This Scripture theme, writes Kimball, "is intended to flow throughout the event via multiple experiences, multiple ways to participate in the message as a community, and multiple opportunities for the Spirit to minister to those hurting and to convict those in sin."[89] The goal of this method for Kimball is to see a moving away from a "more consumer-oriented, 'sit and watch' event to a more vintage, community oriented participatory gathering which points us toward experiencing God in a transcending way."[90] The ultimate aim is to *experience* God, not just know about him.

An example of this method can be drawn from a sermon preached by Kimball about the meaning of the wide and narrow gate from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:13–14). As people entered the space for gathered worship they had to walk through an intentionally established narrow passage way. Therefore, as people entered the preaching setting, the very experience of walking through the entrance way served as a teaching medium. In addition, Matthew 7:13-14 was strategically placed on a screen for all to see as they came through the narrow gate.[91] Other examples of how Kimball creates an interactive-holistic teaching experience involve the arts, visuals, prayer stations, and personal testimonies.[92]

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[86] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 186.

[87] Ibid., 122–23. This differs from the modern contemporary worship gathering where the preacher and his message is the centerpiece of the worship event and it is presumed that it is here that God will work the most in the lives of people.

[88] Ibid., 123. Kimball refers to this as a more "organic" approach to worship. He writes, "In an organic worship gathering . . . the teaching begins even as people walk through the doors and continues by way of various elements throughout the whole gathering." Or, "The experiential theme is woven into and flows throughout the gathering as the focal point and centerpiece."

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 85. Part of the terminology used for this type of teaching is called "creating a sacred space." Vintage Faith Church has a sacred space team that looks at ways to make the worship space more conducive to teach.

[92] A few examples of how Kimball uses these other items to teach include the following: visual-a cross is placed in the typical spot where the preacher would stand to emphasize the priority of Christ; art- paintings are created based on the text used for a given sermon or sermon series;

Thus, at Vintage Faith church, the central theme on a given Sunday is experienced in multiple ways as the body participates in the message as community. Kimball believes this approach is the most effective means by which to create followers of Jesus in the context of an emerging culture. He writes,

> If the goal of our preaching is to bring behavioral change as people learn to become disciples of Jesus, and if we focus only on preaching with words to the exclusion of experiential teaching, we will not have the impact we are hoping for in our emerging culture. We need to give people truthful experiences along with truthful teaching.[93]

Kimball refers to this experiential-participatory-holistic preaching as "wordless preaching in a world that bases truth on experience."[94] Preaching that encompasses visuals and various art forms thus blending propositional truth and experiential truth is the combination most effective for reaching today's emerging culture.[95] This interactive approach encompasses and reflects communication changes that have emerged over the last decade—a shift from broadcast to interactive.[96] The primary reason for this interactive teaching is because postmoderns arrive at faith decisions through a process of experience first, which then influences behavior second, which in turn influences belief last.[97] Thus, for Kimball, experiential

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testimonies- open mic sessions are created for people to testify about God or share Scripture in relation to a given sermon theme; and prayer stations- creative booths or areas to pray are created for prayer and contemplation, often times designated to a specific theme or prayer need. See Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 85. Cf. Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 127–70.

Kimball believes in the value of these experiential elements for worship. He writes, "Through various experiential elements as well as through the space itself, we can actually preach biblical truth. Art preaches. Scripture preaches. Music preaches. Even silence preaches." See Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 186.

[93] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 187.

[94] Ibid., 186.

[95] Ibid., 188. Kimball asserts that the modern church has forgotten or neglected the reality that there are multiple ways Christians can learn about God. All of the chips for preaching/teaching have been placed on propositional proclamation; it is time, he believes, to balance this method with more experiential elements. He writes, "We need to blend our propositions of truth with experiences of truth."

[96] Ibid., 187. The print world gave way to the visual or broadcast world (radio and television), which has now given way to an interactive world.

[97] Ibid. See appendix 3 for a comparison of the postmodern/modern process.

teaching is a must in order to influence and reach he emerging culture.[98]

Dialogue represents the third and final observation of Kimball's preaching methodology. Kimball intentionally incorporates methods that seek to develop a culture of interacting, questioning, and thinking in the context of community. Setting up open forums periodically after the worship gatherings provides one example of how this is accomplished.[99] The congregation is invited, encouraged, and challenged to ask questions about the service, or any prior teaching. Kimball's biblical foundation for this method stems from Acts 17:11, which he references as one of his favorite verses.[100] He writes, "God gives approval to those who were willing to question what they were being taught, using Scripture as a plumbline for truth."[101] It is this Berean model that Kimball wants to see implemented with the emerging church culture. Far too often he has discovered that evangelical Christians are criticized for being overly dogmatic and closed-minded when it comes to genuine dialogue.[102] This, he believes, has created a trust issue with the emerging culture; a trust issue that must be disarmed by welcoming authentic conversation about the deeper questions of life, Scripture, and the church.[103]

Shifting attention away from the preacher to the story or Scripture reflects one purpose for more dialogue. Dialogue can help decrease the attention from the preacher, and if properly channeled, can increase the people's attention on the Scripture.[104] Kimball insists that it is the preacher's responsibility to create an *ethos* in the church where the people become students of the Word themselves and not solely dependent upon the preacher.[105] The church is not to revolve around one solo voice.[106]

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[98] Ibid. Kimball writes, "If the goal of our preaching is to bring about behavioral change as people learn to become disciples of Jesus, and if we focus only on preaching with words to the exclusion of experiential teaching, we will not have the impact we are hoping for in our emerging culture. We need to give people truthful experiences along with truthful teaching."

[99] Kimball, "Preaching in the Emerging Church," 91.

[100] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 192.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., 193.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 190–91.

[105] Ibid., 191.

[106] This statement is not to imply that Kimball does not believe that God has established the role of preaching in the church and that He has set some aside for this task and blesses them with the gift to do so. Ibid.

Methods employed by Kimball to help create this student driven, feed yourself the Word dynamic, include some of the following. First, he has reestablished the bringing of Bibles to worship gatherings. As the preacher, he brings attention to the words of Scripture during the teaching event, not himself, pointing people to the Bible when reading key passages.[107] Second, he incorporates the church body in public reading of Scripture. Rarely does Kimball read the central passage for his preaching. This, he believes, "Takes the attention off the preacher and places it more on the community."[108] Third, he publicly has the entire church body read Scripture together.[109] Fourth, he practices transparency with the Scriptures in areas of challenge—inviting others to struggle with the multiple possible interpretations of a particular passage. Kimball has established occasional "think tanks" during or after the service in order to wrestle with specific issues and developed an email discussion group where the church body can engage in theological discussions and questions throughout the week.[110]

Finally, as the preacher/shepherd, Kimball journeys together with the church instead of presenting himself as "message giver and problem solver."[111] He has found that incorporating inclusive language when giving instruction to the church provides a simple way to express this community concept in the preaching event. Instead of "You should do this," or "You should share your faith," Kimball says "We should do this," and/or "We should share the faith."[112] All of these simple methods, or preaching adjustments, help create a learning atmosphere of openness and interaction with the preacher that will ultimately lead the body deeper into the Word of God. Thus, dialogue, as a core value, has become a staple for not only the emerging culture but also for Kimball's preaching methodology.

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[107] Ibid., 191–92.
[108] Ibid., 192.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 193.
[111] Ibid., 194.
[112] Ibid.

Conclusion

This completes a review of Kimball's message, mentality, and method for preaching within the emerging church. The intent has been to provide a careful investigation of his homiletical convictions taken from his own writings, sermons, and personal observations by this author. The following remarks present a recap of these findings.

The message section provided an inquiry into Kimball's beliefs about the Bible and the core of the gospel. While Kimball believes the Bible has specific applicational value, he rejects seeing the Scripture as a simple "how-to-manual" with concrete answers to all of life's questions—void of any complexity or mystery. He does embrace Scripture as inspired by God and authoritative for his life and preaching. He understands that the purpose of Scripture is to lead people into a life-changing experience with God, as disciples/followers of Jesus. He approaches this aim through a hermeneutic of humility and a narrative lens that values the historical context of the Word. Kimball's gospel convictions maintain a Pauline purity (1 Cor 15:3–4) that embraces eternal salvation from sin through the substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross, along with a strong emphasis on what he considers to be a holistic gospel, which incorporates living out the kingdom of God here on earth.

The mentality section unfolded several aspects of Kimball's philosophy on preaching. Of utmost importance is a personal *ethos* of humility and complete dependence upon God. Other significant convictions included a flexible mindset about how to best engage an emerging generation with the gospel; the importance of communicating the meta-narrative of Scripture; digging deeper in the text with an aim for theocentric preaching; creating space for dialogue; and being open to new and creative ways of communicating God's truth.

Kimball's preaching methods represented the last homiletical category for examination. He insisted for change in methodology due to the changes in culture and contemporary worldviews. His personal adjustments to preaching included a theotopical approach to proclamation, increased audience participation through interactive-multi-sensory methods centered

around a central biblical theme, and embracing dialogue as a central value in the preaching event to an emerging generation.

This concludes assessing Kimball's voice for preaching within the emerging church. A critique of his homiletical message, mentality, and method in light of Scripture will come in part three of this work. For now, it is time to turn to the final emerging church preacher—one who seeks a missional reformation for the gospel of Jesus Christ in an emerging culture.

CHAPTER 7
MARK DRISCOLL: REFORMISSION PREACHING

Message

Driscoll's message (theology) posits a propositional perspicuity about the person and finished work of Jesus. Referring to the preaching ministry at Mars Hill he asserts that "all of our preaching and teaching is Jesus."[1] Jesus is the message for Driscoll![2] Just how this Jesus-centered theological bent relates to his conviction about Scripture and how it emerges into his contextualized message of the gospel will be the focus of this section.

The Bible

What is the Bible to Driscoll? As if taken directly out of a Reformed playbook, Driscoll refers to himself as a "devoted Biblicist."[3] The Bible understood and preached as the "eternal timeless truths of God"[4] underscores his Scriptural conviction while revealing his camaraderie with the traditional Protestant/Puritan position on divine revelation. Driscoll's work, "The Emerging Church and Biblicist Theology," written as a chapter for *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches* illumines this position with

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[1] Mark Driscoll, quoted in Scott Thomas, "Interview with Mark Driscoll by Dr. Ed Stetzer," *Acts 29 Network Web Site*, n.p. [cited 9 May 2007]. Online: http://www.acts29network.org/acts-29-blog/interview-with-mark-driscoll-by-dr-ed-stetzer.

[2] Driscoll, at the Sept. 21–22, 2007 *Convergent Conference* at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, stated that "there is nothing that we have to offer apart from the person of Jesus and His work on the cross." Quoted in Tammi Ledbetter, "Conference examines the emerging church," *Baptist Press*, n.p. [cited 19 Dec. 2007]. Online: http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=26496.

[3] Mark Driscoll, "The Emerging Church and Biblicist Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 21.

[4] Mark Driscoll, "How Important Is It to Understand the People You Preach To?" *The Resurgence Web Site,* n.p. [cited 29 Jan. 2008]. Online: http://www.theresurgence .com/national_resurgence_conference_2008--text_and_context.

conspicuous clarity, if not irritating lucidity—for some.[5] In this chapter, Driscoll articulates his view of Scripture, which can be framed into three basic categories that will serve as a useful guide for this discussion.

First, the Bible is God's divine revelation to man. Scripture, being divinely given to man by God, cannot be placed in the same camp with philosophers or religious elites who present mere "speculations about God, with seemingly endless and contradictory declarations."[6] For Driscoll, God reveals Himself through inspired Scripture, with clarity, in order that He can be known and worshipped. Since "Scripture is God-breathed and for our benefit," writes Driscoll, "there is not a page of Scripture that is not helpful to our faith, so we should examine it all."[7] As expected, since Driscoll views the Bible as God's ultimate handiwork, then it is without error, can be fully trusted, and thus warrants a Second Timothy-like examination (2 Tim 2:15; 3:16–17).[8]

Driscoll, desiring to be as "faithful to Scripture as possible," only attributes to the Bible what God Himself testifies it to be.[9] No shortage of attributes appears in his review of what Scripture claims about itself. The Bible pronounced as effective (Isa 55:11), pure (Ps 12:6; 119:140), perfect (Ps 19:7), true (Ps 119:160; John 17:17), and flawless (Prov 30:5) present but a few characteristics in his list of biblical claims.[10] Pagitt has arguably penned Driscoll's view of Scripture the clearest, albeit in disagreement with his find. He

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[5] Robert Webber notes of Driscoll's chapter that he "rejects postmodern philosophies and methodologies in favor of a hard-hitting, text-proving argument for the Christian faith." He supports what Webber refers to as a "theological traditionalist" position with over seven hundred verses of Scripture. See Robert Webber, "Introduction: The Interaction of Culture and Theology," in *The Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 16.

See Doug Pagitt, "Response to Mark Driscoll," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Church: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 42–44, for a rebuff or rebuke of Driscoll's use of Scripture in this chapter. Pagitt claims Driscoll uses the Bible in a "reference approach" where passages are placed in and around an argument, which to Pagitt "is not in and of itself a proper way of being informed by the Scriptures." Driscoll heads off Pagitt's rebuke in his response to Pagitt's chapter saying "Doug may accuse me of proof texting these points . . . but such a move seems at best a thinly veiled attempt to not deal with the truth claims of Scripture." See Mark Driscoll, "Response to Doug Pagitt," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 146. Pagitt also criticized Driscoll for what he felt was an issue of power—to be right, to win, to have a concrete, unchanging system of belief.

[6] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 22.

[7] Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 95.

[8] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 22.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] Ibid., 22.

assesses Driscoll's approach to Scripture as "the Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it."[11] Pagitt appears to be right. For Driscoll, whether the Old or New Testament, the internal consistency of the Bible's clear message presents a closed case for the veracity of Scripture being the very words of God—words he faithfully desires to live by and herald.[12]

Second, the Bible's purpose is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Scripture begins with the introduction of God as the hero; Scripture concludes, having revealed in fullness, who is this hero—God the Son, Jesus.[13] No haze surrounds Driscoll's thoughts about Jesus being the centerpiece of Scripture.[14] Granted, argues Driscoll, there may be other reasons for the existence of Scripture, but "chief among them is the revelation of the person and work of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."[15] He is in "fact the very thread that wove all of Scripture together" (Matt 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44-45; John 5:39).[16] Whether modern, postmodern, or somewhere in between, an active listener sitting through a message of Driscoll's at Mars Hill will not leave confused about this preacher's passion to expound and exalt Jesus in the Scripture.[17]

Drawing from the teaching of Jesus and His disciples, Driscoll affirms the Old Testament canon and its ultimate fulfillment by Jesus and revelation of Him, which was and is its

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[11] Ibid., 44.

[12] Ibid., 24. Driscoll states that "we can trust the internal consistency of the Bible to be a chorus of faithful witnesses who sing together in harmony." Living by the Word as a missionary to culture represents the heartbeat of Driscoll and Mars Hill Church. "Guided by the timeless truths of Scripture," Driscoll believes Christians can live countercultural lives like Jesus as missionaries in the context and culture of which they have been divinely placed. See Mark Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 141.

[13] Ibid., 26. Driscoll, promoting a narrative teaching style argues for the Bible being "presented as one unified story with Jesus as the hero." See Driscoll, *Confessions*, 95.

[14] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 23. Driscoll opines, "Jesus is the key focus of Scripture. . . ."

[15] Mark Driscoll, "Pastoral Reflections on Bible Translations: Why We Preach from the ESV," *Acts 29 Network* n.p. [cited 9 May 2007]. Online: http://www.acts29network.org/article/pastoral-reflections-on-bible-translations-why-we-pre. Cf. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Jesus: Timeless Answers to Timely Questions* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2007), 75, where Driscoll states, "The written Word of God, or Scripture, exists to reveal the incarnate Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ."

[16] Ibid.

[17] A Mars Hill church member claimed that "no matter what Mark is preaching about—even the most obscure verses—he always brings it back to Jesus." Quote taken from personal notes as part of an interview conducted by this author with an attendee of Mars Hill Church, June 3, 2007.

"primary purpose."[18] Jesus and His followers upheld the "Scripture as God's unique, perfect, authoritative, helpful and powerful revelation to humanity."[19] And, as a member on the same team drawing from the same playbook, so does Driscoll.[20] In step with other young, restless, and reformed pastors, he holds to the "verbal, plenary, inerrancy, and authority of the Scripture," even if, as he jests, he is the "only guy in Seattle who does."[21]

In the same manner as the New Testament writers who believed that what they were writing was divinely inspired of God, claiming "that their writings were holy" and that they were "the very words of God," Driscoll does the same.[22] In short, just as the whole of Scripture claims that "what the Bible says is what God says" so does Driscoll.[23] To Driscoll, what the Bible clearly wants to say, or wants to reveal to man, is Jesus. It is for this reason, learned early in his preaching ministry at Mars Hill, Driscoll works at connecting "every passage of Scripture to Jesus."[24] Thus, for Driscoll, one's view of Scripture takes on a life or death weightiness—"because without a proper understanding of Scripture, we cannot truly know and love the real Jesus."[25] This Jesus, God, the hero of the Bible, is the primary and unflinching message of Driscoll's preaching.[26]

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[18] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 23.

[19] Ibid., 23–24.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Mark Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture," *SEBTS*, n.p. [cited 25 Oct. 2007]. Online: http/www.sebts.edu/convergent/generalinfo/. The description "young, restless, and reformed" is drawn from Collin Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2008). This work has a complete chapter devoted to Driscoll and Mars Hill Church—"Missional Mind-set" (135–52).

[22] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 24.

[23]Ibid.

[24] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 94.

[25] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 26. The implications of this being that if one does not come to know and surrender unto Jesus as Lord, then the eternal destiny that awaits them is hell. Driscoll emphatically holds to a literal heaven and hell. Concerning the exclusivity of Jesus, he writes, "He alone is the sole, narrow path to eternal life and that all other paths are merely paths to eternal death in hell." See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Jesus*, 26.

[26] "Jesus is the hero, not me or you" could well be the continuous mantra of Driscoll's preaching. This phrase, or similar remarks, are articulated often within his sermons and public addresses. Driscoll's conviction about Jesus as the content of his preaching mirrors Puritan proclamation. Bruce Bickel, writing about the Puritan pulpit, shares the following about the content of Puritan preaching: "The Puritan's concern was light and heat—light from the pure Word of God to penetrate the darkness of the heart and soul of the hearer, heat from the pathos and passion of the heart and soul of the preacher to bring about conviction. The main work of the gospel minister . . . was to preach the saving efficacy of the redeeming work of the holy Sovereign." See Bruce Bickel, *Light and Heat: The Puritan View of the Pulpit and The Focus of the Gospel in Puritan Preaching* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2nd Printing, 1999), 30. Driscoll recommends this work on preaching in addition to

Third, the Bible is authoritative. Yet not everyone submits to this authority. Driscoll notes four reasons for, or examples of, such contemporary complacency toward Scripture having the last word.[27] First, people seek connection to God apart from Jesus or divine revelation, which lends itself to mysticism, not biblical Christianity. Second, modern interpreters see events in Scripture through naturalistic lenses that explain away the miraculous. Third, what needs to be known in order to live the Christian life comes by means of Holy Scripture. Christians can find value in lower courts of authority, such as tradition and experience; yet these lower courts, claims Driscoll, should never trump "the clear teachings of Scripture as the metaphorical Supreme Court of final authority."[28]

The final example of misplaced authority involves interpretation. Driscoll blames Satan and faults postmoderns for their errant "philosophical grid of rules for textual interpretation."[29] He rants against postmoderns who impose or e*isegete* the text in order to fit or appease cultural values, which leads to ignoring or altering "the meaning of Scripture altogether."[30] In contrast, Driscoll's exegetical purpose fixates on getting to the true meaning of the text, or authorial intent, which ultimately is God. Superimposing upon the text as a result of refusing to come under Scripture, and thus sacrificing hermeneutical integrity is not an option for Driscoll.[31]

Postmoderns, who arrogantly elevate themselves over the Scripture, model, from Driscoll's perspective, the same serendipitous move of the serpent who "tempted our first parents

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Brian Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). See Acts 29 Network, "Recommended Books," *Acts 29 Network*, n.p. [cited 4 Mar. 2009]. Online: http://www.acts29network.org/resources/recommended-books/preaching/.

[27] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 24–26. These pages cover the four reasons mentioned in the following paragraphs.

[28] Ibid., 25.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 26. See Mark Driscoll, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question 3: A Prologue and Rant by Mark Driscoll," *Out of Ur/Christianity Today Blog*, n.p. [cited 17 Oct., 2007]. Online: http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o_2.html, where he "rants" against the position of McLaren and Pagitt on homosexuality. The nature of his rebuke led to a later apology from Driscoll, not for his biblical convictions against homosexuality, but for what he termed as his "sinful and poor taste" in how he communicated his response.

[31] Ibid. Driscoll sees the "growing 'Christian' defense of homosexuality" as a "blatant postmodern use of Scripture." Other watershed issues, which for Him are clearly defined in Scripture, but misrepresented by some postmodern interpretations, are inerrancy, penal substitutionary atonement, heaven, and hell. See Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 139.

with the hermeneutical question, 'Did God really say . . .?'"[32] Dialoguing about the text for Driscoll may have its place, but not when conversation supersedes obedience and submission to the Scriptures.[33] The postmodern problem—one that Driscoll "should be regarded as nothing short of hostile toward," according to Collin Hansen of *Christianity Today*—clearly involves the diffusing of authority.[34] This is what represents the real issue for the postmodern era—authority, not interpretation—according to Driscoll's vantage point as a charter member of the emerging church movement.[35]

Does this mean Driscoll rejects any value from other sources of authority? No. Driscoll does not reject the value of the church, Christian community, and/or the legacy of vintage teachers, in helping unfold the meaning of Scripture; however, Scripture should always remain the best tool for interpreting Scripture and the "locus of final authority over us"—the church.[36] How this reformed view of divine revelation translates into the gospel message will become the focus of the next section.

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[32] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 26.

[33] Driscoll remarked at the SEBTS Convergent Conference that many within the emerging church are having conversations about matters God has already determined. With a punch of humor, he said, "Of course I don't mind a conversation, I've got a wife and two daughters, I've had them. But, when God speaks, we are not to converse, we are to obey." Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture," quoted in Lauren Crane, "Driscoll Takes Stand on Key Doctrinal Issues," *Olive Press Online*, n.p. [cited 14 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.sebts.edu/olivepressonline/PrintArticle.cfm?ArticleID=600.

Driscoll distinguishes between what he refers to as the air war and ground war. The air war represents the corporate Sunday preaching ministry, which comes first. The ground war follows, representing small group ministries, which lend themselves to conversation about the Scriptures. See Mark Driscoll, "Air War and Ground War," *Sermon Audio, Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 10 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://www.marshillchurch.org/media/nehemiah?page=2, for an explanation of this preaching philosophy. Nehemiah 8:1–12 served as the text for this message. Cf. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 261–62.

[34] Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 139.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 26. Driscoll, preaching on Nehemiah 8:1–12, stated in his message that "the highest authority at Mars Hill is the Scripture, not me." In the same way the people of God in Nehemiah's day opened the book, which led to great joy, he claimed that for people today, the "only way to have joy is to open the book and to understand it." See Driscoll, "Air War and Ground War."

Cf. also Lauren Crane, "Driscoll takes stand on key doctrinal issues." Quoting Driscoll from his *Convergent Conference Lecture*, she records him as saying, "I believe in *prima scriptura*, that Scripture is our highest authority. I believe that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable."

The Gospel

What is the gospel for Driscoll? Tying this question to the previous discussion, Driscoll holds that "the gospel of Jesus Christ is the heart of the Scriptures."[37] In 1 Cor 15:1–8 Pauline fashion, he qualifies the succinctness of the gospel as "Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection to save sinners."[38] This message first penetrated Driscoll's mind and heart while reading through the New Testament in college. God revealed to Driscoll his pharisaical complex of pursuing "righteousness apart from Jesus" leading him to repent of sin and self-righteousness and trusting in the promises of Rom 1:6—"And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."[39] Trusting in his God initiated, Jesus-centered, Spirit-led conversion, and holding on to what little he had learned in the Bible—that he "sucked and that Jesus is God"—Driscoll began his first gospel ministry in his dorm room just days after. In his own words, "Jesus saved me and made me a Christian."[40] To his surprise, roughly ten college buddies, hooked by and hooked on the Simpson's, agreed to participate in Driscoll's Bible study.[41] Since that time his preaching ministry has expanded and his message has matured, yet it has always remained tethered to the succinctness and simplicity of the saving-redemptive work of Jesus at Calvary.[42]

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[37] Mark Driscoll, *The Radical Reformission: Reaching Out without Selling Out* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 19.

[38] Ibid., 19.

[39] Ibid., 13. Cf. also Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Jesus*, 81.

[40] Driscoll, *Reformission*, 13, and Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Jesus*, 81. See also Mark Driscoll, "The Last of the Hepcat Churches, in *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for Communities of Faith*, (ed. Jennifer Ashley; Orlando: Relevant Books, 2005), 22, where Driscoll states, of his conversion experience while in college, "As I read the Bible, the primary themes that stuck out were that I suck and Jesus is God, but at some point, God gave me the faith to be a Christian."

[41] Driscoll used his cable television for what he calls "evangelistic bait" by telling his college buddies that if they attended his Bible study they could watch the Simpson's afterward. See Driscoll, *Reformission*, 13.

[42] Easter weekend, 2008, Driscoll preached to nearly 12,000 people about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ to save sinners. He wrote of this weekend, "Yesterday, while singing with the congregation at each of the five services I preach live, I could not stop weeping. People were singing loudly with their hands in the air. They cheered all day as people came forward to give their lives to Jesus to be baptized." Mark Driscoll, quoted from *Adrian Warnock*, *Is Mark Driscoll In a Revival? Adrian Warnock Web Site*, n.p. [cited 1 April, 2008]. Online: http/www.adrianwarnock.com. Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Jesus*, 128–29.

Kimball, responding to Driscoll's theology, remarked how his passion for Scripture and the gospel has remained the same since their first encounter in 1997. The only difference, writes Kimball, is "that he now has more solidity and clarity" to his message "with a much larger church." About this message, Kimball asserts, "He is Reformed to the core, and as long as I have known him,

For a closer investigation of this matured understanding of Driscoll's view of the gospel, this work will again turn to his theological treatise in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*. Here Driscoll answers the question "Why did Jesus die on the cross?" which presents a useful four part outline that expresses his seasoned view of the good news.[43]

The first gospel truth of Scripture, argued by Driscoll, claims that mankind is sinful. In likeness to the first man Adam, when he "fell out of favor with God, so did every person who would ever live."[44] Mankind, having inherited a sinful nature, is thus separated from God, incapable of pleasing God, and lives in rebellion against God. Although mankind still bears the image of God, he nevertheless remains apart from Him due to his being marred by sin. Thus, man resides in a predicament from which he cannot save himself for "salvation is solely a work of God."[45] Second, God is holy and just. This means that God is "absolutely separate from any evil" and that his justice demands that He "deal with sin and sinners and does so justly."[46] The reality that God despises sin presents the third gospel truth. His anger burns against it; He hates it.

So how do these truths that show mankind in a disparaging disposition before God, lead to good news (gospel)? The fourth and final truth of this outline that God deals with all sinners and sin through Jesus provides the answer. This truth, fleshed out by Driscoll, welcomes discussion on the finished and victorious work of Jesus at Calvary—the atonement. Driscoll's protracted discussion, here and elsewhere, highlights his developed understanding of the gospel.[47] He determinedly works at avoiding

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nothing seems to change in this regard." See Dan Kimball, "Response to Mark Driscoll," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Church: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 39–41.

[43] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 29–35. Driscoll ties this four part outline to "God's character, God's creation, human sin, and the response of God to sin and sinners" (29).

[44] Ibid., 29.

[45] Ibid., 33.

[46] Ibid., 30.

[47] *Vintage Jesus* provides Driscoll's fullest written expression about the person and work of Jesus Christ—the gospel. Cf. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Death By Love: Letters from the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 163–77. Here Driscoll discusses his view of the atonement, which he refers to as unlimited limited atonement. He writes, "Objectively, Jesus' death was sufficient to save anyone and, subjectively, efficient only to save those who repent of their sin and trust in him. This position is called unlimited limited atonement, or modified Calvinism. Or, as your daddy calls it, biblical" (172).

the fallacy of reductionism by presenting the core of the gospel—Jesus' finished work on the cross—as one presenting a jewel that offers a plethora of "glorious sides."[48] These sides include the following: Jesus died in place of sinners—penal substitution; Jesus died to ransom many people; Jesus died to forgive sins; Jesus died to justify sinners; Jesus died to propitiate God's wrath and expiate our sin; Jesus died to reconcile people to God and each other; Jesus died to ransom sinners by paying their debt to God; Jesus died to take our sin and impute righteousness to us; and Jesus died to forgive sins of the elect.[49]

Driscoll's position on this finished work of Jesus at Calvary is that it "is the true gospel revealed to us by God through Scripture."[50] It is good news in that "the Trinitarian God who created us, mercifully endures our sin, and sent Jesus Christ to live and die in our place, thereby saving us from eternal wrath if we repent of sin and trust in him alone."[51] This is, according to Driscoll's doctrinal convictions, the "one story" of the Bible that must forever remain as the central message for proclamation—to do otherwise would invite hellish consequences.[52]

Mentality

For Driscoll, preaching is central to the church and the center of the church's preaching is Jesus.[53] In predictable progression,

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[48] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 30.

[49] Ibid., 30–31. Driscoll provides a surplus of Scripture references to support each of the different aspects of Jesus' work on the cross. The entire list consist of twenty different "sides" to the cross event. Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Jesus*, 107–26.

[50] Driscoll, "Biblicist Theology," 35.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid. Driscoll's gospel conviction drives his missional passion. His work, *The Radical Reformission*, presents a "radical call for Christians . . . to recommit to living and speaking the gospel . . ."—"to continually unleash the gospel to do its work of reforming dominate cultures and subcultures." Driscoll believes the Church has become lame in penetrating the various cultures in this country with the unchanging truths of the gospel. He asserts that what is needed is the proclamation of the true gospel from churches that are "faithful both to the scriptural texts and to the cultural contexts of America." Thus a call to reformission is about learning how to best live "in the tension of being Christians and churches who are culturally liberal yet theologically conservative and who are driven by the gospel of grace to love their Lord, brothers, and neighbors." See Driscoll, *Reformission*, 20, 18, and 22 respectively.

[53] For Driscoll, even the repetitive mentioning of Jesus' name matters. Teaching on preaching he writes, "Jesus' name should be spoken repeatedly throughout a sermon so that it is clear which God you are speaking of." Even church growth is tied to preaching Jesus, "Jesus promised that if He is lifted up He would draw people and the key to church growth is the exaltation of Jesus." See Mark Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture," *Acts 29 Network*, n.p. [cited 5 Oct., 2007]. Online: http://uploads

Driscoll's philosophy about preaching follows his reformed faithfulness to Scripture. If Scripture chiefly exists to declare Jesus—that He might be exalted, the Father glorified, and man come to know Him as Lord—then preaching for Driscoll exists for the same reason. At the 2008 National Resurgence Conference, Text and Context, Driscoll, seeking to put preachers in their place by acknowledging the High Priest in His, claimed, "The Bible is rightly preached when Jesus is the hero, Savior, and centerpiece."[54] With the preaching of Jesus—His incarnation, deity, humility, and glory[55]—established as the philosophical core of Driscoll's homiletics, this section will now seek to unfold six additional facets deemed important in understanding his preaching mindset.

First, Driscoll, desiring to exalt Jesus as the hero of the message, exhorts expositional preaching as the primary means by which to accomplish this goal.[56] By definition, expository preaching seeks to expose and explain the original meaning of the text with the preacher having placed himself under, not over, the text.[57] Driscoll's homiletical philosophy matches this definition with Nehemiah 8:8 clarity.[58] Just as Ezra and the Levites "gave the sense" of God's Word, helping the people to "understand the reading," so does Driscoll. And, just as the nation of Israel received the Word of God with joy—"because they understood the words that were declared to them," so does Driscoll believe Mars Hill will

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.acts29network.org/media/RegionalEvents/Preaching&TeachingJesusfromScriptureComplete.pdf.

[54] Mark Driscoll, "Putting Preachers in Their Place," *The Resurgence Web Site*, n.p. [cited 25, Feb., 2008). Online: http://theresurgence.com/national_resurgence_conference_2008--text_and_context.

[55] Ibid. Cf. also Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," 125–47. The essence of this entire article is to emphasize the need to avoid reductionism by preaching both the incarnation and exaltation of Jesus.

[56] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 95. Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 92, where he states, "Over the years, most of my preaching has been expositional and has rotated between Old and New Testament books."

[57] Chapell, as recommended by Driscoll (footnote 26), defines expository preaching as endeavoring "to discover and convey the precise meaning of the Word. Scripture rules over what expositors preach because they unfold what it says. The meaning of the passage is the message of the sermon. The text governs the preacher." See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 23.

[58] Nehemiah 8:1–12 presents a telling story in support of expository preaching. Driscoll preached this text in an expositional manner giving the congregants a "sense of its meaning," in like fashion with Ezra. At one point in the message, he placed his Bible on the floor and stood on top of it declaring that this is how some approach God's Word. He then picked it up, placed it over his head and declared that this is how he (Mars Hill Church) approaches the Word. Driscoll places himself under the authority of the Word of God; he does not preside in authority over it.

receive such satisfaction and sanctification through clear and contextualized expositional sermons.[59]

A second facet of Driscoll's preaching philosophy, preaching as one with authority, closely correlates with his expositional aim. Driscoll holds that one of the benefits to expository preaching is that "it forces the authority to reside in the text and not the teacher."[60] Therefore, in Haddon Robinson like fashion, he holds a homiletical philosophy that seeks to bend his thoughts to the text rather than bending the text to his preconceived thoughts.[61] In order to frame his sermons around the original intent of the author he invokes two basic hermeneutical questions in approaching the text. First, "What does Scripture say?" and second, "What does Scripture mean?"[62] Both questions help guide his sermon preparation, which involves a grammatical, historical, and theological investigation of the text. Upon grasping the meaning of the text, much of Driscoll's preaching then becomes "simply explaining what the Scripture says."[63] Explaining what God says from God's perspective thus underlines the message with God's authority.

Preaching with authority equally lends itself to rejecting dialogue and embracing monologue, representing a third facet of Driscoll's homiletical philosophy. He holds back no reservations when expressing his disdain for dialogical preaching as the main teaching attraction for the gathered church. He sees this form of preaching stemming from a "low view of the Bible, church leadership, the gift of preaching/teaching, and the postmodern addiction to complete egalitarianism in the home and church"—all as a result of "a disdain for authority."[64] Additionally, he concludes

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[59] In Bickel, *Light and Heat* (recommend source/footnote 26), this message of preaching leading to holiness can be found throughout. For example, Jonathon Edwards is highlighted as one who believed sanctification of the people could be attributed to a faithful pastor who commits himself to expository preaching (29).

[60] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture."

[61] Haddon Robinson is known for his teaching on expository preaching. See Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository* Messages (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980). In an interview in *Preaching*, he made the remark, "Do you bend your thought to the text or do you bend the text to fit your thought" when speaking about an expository preaching philosophy. See Haddon Robinson, "Expository Preaching in a Narrative World: An interview with Haddon Robinson," interview by Michael Duduit, *Preaching* 17/1 (2001): 4.

[62] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture." In this preaching article, Driscoll provides five sermon-framing questions that he states "shape every one of my sermons." All five questions will be covered over the course of this section.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

that growing a church beyond triple digits or the century mark is impossible by this homiletical means; what is worse, it welcomes the rise and influence of false teachers.[65] Therefore, Driscoll, modeling Jesus, while rejecting preaching as the gathered church engaging in "one big internet chat room," chooses proclamation over conversation during the air war—corporate worship preaching event—but does welcome dialogue as part of the ground war—small group Bible studies.[66]

Preaching facets four and five explicably link preaching to ecclesiology and missiology. For Driscoll the church exists because of preaching and there exists "no such thing as a church without preaching."[67] The New Testament Church, from Driscoll's interpretive vantage point, was birthed by preaching, grows by preaching, and is sustained by preaching.[68] Granted, he will argue that it is not the only thing about what constitutes a church, "but it is the key."[69] Using God the Father and God the Son as his guide, Driscoll argues that God reveals Himself as a preacher from Genesis to Revelation.[70] Thus, the true church, unlike some of Driscoll's contemporaries who seem bent on downplaying or diminishing the role of preaching for the church, must include

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[65] Ibid. Congregants who wanted to incorporate dialogical preaching and teachings of other religions (syncretism/pluralism) in postmodern fashion, challenged Driscoll during the early launch phase of Mars Hill Church. After intense study of the Scriptures—wrestling with what would become his own theology of preaching—Driscoll, in his own words, "decided not to back off from a preaching monologue but instead to work hard at becoming a solid long-winded, old-school Bible preacher that focused on Jesus." His conviction that his "people needed to hear from God's Word and not from each other in collective ignorance like some dumb chat room" is what drove this decision. See Driscoll, *Confessions*, 77.

[66] Driscoll provided a strong defense for the monologue preaching ministry of Jesus in his sermon address at the *2008 National Resurgence, Text and Context Conference*. He stated emphatically that Jesus' ministry began with preaching, arguing that "it's not sharing, it's proclaiming." See Driscoll, "Putting Preachers in Their Place." Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 87–88.

Rebuking what he considers the foolishness of replacing monologue preaching from a called leader to spiritual dialogue among a group of peers, Driscoll likens it to making "about as much sense as shooting your doctor and gathering with the other patients in his lobby to speculate about what is wrong with one another and randomly write out prescriptions for one another in the name of equality." See Driscoll, *Reformission*, 173.

[67] Driscoll, "Putting Preachers in Their Place."

[68] Ibid. Driscoll believes church discipline should be practiced to protect the Word in addition to the sacraments being rightly administered as a visual expression of the Word preached.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid. Driscoll uses the first thirty minutes of this message to reveal the preaching ministry of God the Father and God the Son. He argues from Scripture that the first sermon from God was given when He spoke creation into existence. What infuriates Driscoll is hearing how some call into question preaching when he sees God starting with preaching and the fact that Jesus came preaching. Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 86–88.

preaching.[71] Put simply, a church that does not incorporate preaching, by Driscoll's definition, is not a church.[72]

If preaching cannot be detached from the true church, neither, claims Driscoll, can it be disconnected from the church's mission. Three additional sermon framing questions used by Driscoll to design his messages reveal this missiological intent. First, upon discovering the original message of the author he raises the question, "Why do we resist the truth?" The aim in this portion of his sermon preparation is to predict potential rejection points by the listener in order to counter these objections with God's truth.[73] Understanding the cultural context of the listener will help equip the messenger to communicate these truths in the most effective form. Modeling what he believes to be the scriptural example, Driscoll states that "the gospel must be contextualized in a way that is accessible to the culture and faithful to the Scriptures."[74] Obtaining this aim, believes Driscoll, will require a continual evaluation of the presentation of the message to ensure that the most effective method is being utilized.[75] Therefore, scriptural accuracy remains a must, but so does seeking to be culturally accessible.[76] Contextualizing the gospel in this culturally accessible way will prayerfully enable the preacher, asserts Driscoll, to bring about a "co-opting" of "their cultural hopes" and bring non-believers to see the gospel "as the only answer to their deepest longing."[77]

"Why does this matter?" presents the second framing question that leads to missional preaching. Driscoll works at

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[71] Ibid. Gibbs and Bolgers assessment of emerging churches offered nine traits found within the movement of which preaching was not included (see chapter 2, footnote 49). Driscoll highlighted this fact as an example of the low view of preaching by some within the emerging church movement.

[72] Ibid. Driscoll believes the church consists of confessing believers. Confessing believers in Jesus Christ will proclaim Him to others. Preaching requires the presence of the church and therefore preaching, for Driscoll, will be impotent if not balanced with the full expression of the church.

[73] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture."

[74] Driscoll, *Reformission*, 55–56. Driscoll references the gospels as an example of how the Bible has been crafted in order to communicate the same unchanging message to diverse cultural groups.

[75] Ibid., 56.

[76] Ibid., 58–60. Driscoll offers seven gospel signposts that he incorporates in his preaching ministry to help people "journey toward Jesus." They are as follows: 1. the gospel connects to this life; 2. the gospel infuses daily activities with meaning; 3. the gospel names sin and points the way to forgiveness; 4. the gospel transforms life; 5. the gospel builds a spiritual family; 6. the gospel is about participation with God; and 7. the gospel is about Jesus as the means and the end of our salvation.

[77] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture."

incorporating in his message the biblical truth for living out the gospel as a missionary from Mars Hill to the city of Seattle. He seeks to counter inactivity by expressing the significance of why it matters, both individually and corporately, to be a missional people.[78] Therefore, Driscoll's preaching aims to connect his message to a "missional purpose for our lives, families, church, and ultimately God's glory."[79] Missiological preaching is more than a sermon point shared a few times a year; for Driscoll, missional preaching is the point.

The final sermon framing question, "How is Jesus the hero/Savior?" leads the focus back to the hero of the mission. Jesus came as a missionary to culture preaching the gospel and the kingdom of God.[80] Under His authority preachers go out to herald this same message (Matt 28:18–20). Driscoll asserts, "We derive our authority to preach the gospel to all peoples, times, and places from the glorious exaltation of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed all authority for himself and commanded us to go in his authority to preach the gospel truth . . . ."[81] How serious does Driscoll embrace this truth? Read his own words, "My answer to everything is pretty much the same: open the Bible and preach about the person of Jesus and his mission for our church."[82] Thus, for Driscoll, missional preaching means lifting up Jesus before the culture as the centerpiece of the Bible and as one unified story that highlights Him as the undeniable hero.[83]

Preaching the Bible as *The Story* or metanarrative presents the final facet of Driscoll's preaching mentality. This does not mean that every sermon should be presented in the form of a story, but rather for Driscoll it does mean that "every sermon fits within 'THE STORY.'"[84] The grand story of redemption or the gospel remains paramount for preaching while at the same time allowing

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] See Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 127–31, for an in-depth discussion of Jesus as a missionary in culture. Driscoll asserts that "Jesus' life was the perfect human life of a missionary in culture" (130). Focusing on incarnational Christology, he writes, it "paves the way for a robust missiology, which is the wonderful upside of a rigorous understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ" (128).

[81] Ibid., 132.

[82] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 86.

[83] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture."

[84] Ibid. The following paragraph of metanarrative insights are drawn from this same article.

the various genres and styles of biblical literature to dictate the specific structure of the sermon. Driscoll offers a six point framework—creation, curse, covenant, Christ, church, and consummation—by which to proclaim the story. His conviction for proclaiming the big story is evidenced by his open critique of his reformed roots in Calvinism. He admonishes Calvinism for having missed the grand story opportunity by beginning with the fall and human depravity instead of the glorious creation message, which introduces God to man in Genesis 1 and 2. With predictability, Driscoll identifies Jesus as the central hero of God's metanarrative, who needs to be proclaimed—both His incarnation and exaltation. Exactly how, in terms of methodology, Jesus is proclaimed as the centerpiece of this metanarrative, becomes the central focus of the final section.

Method

Driscoll's reformed preaching contends for a message and mentality that is hard-hitting; likewise his method also packs a powerful punch.[85] The draw by such an approach leaves many pastor's dumbfounded and wandering, "Is it the message or the man and his medium?"[86] "It's a weird phenomenon," says Driscoll, commenting on his gospel message and method at Mars Hill. "It's like you punch a guy in his face, and he brings his two friends and says, 'Hey, can you punch them too?'"[87] Discussing how Driscoll actually delivers his oratorical punches for the sake of the gospel, through three methodological observations, will be the priority of this section.

Continually changing, yet consistently constant, represents the first methodological observation of Driscoll's preaching.[88]

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[85] This is not surprising for a preacher who enjoys Mixed Martial Arts even to the point of highlighting it from the pulpit and drawing from the sport for sermon illustrations. In a sermon on Nehemiah 13: 23–31, Driscoll referenced a Mixed Martial Arts instructor who claims to bust the nose of any understudy who does not learn to submit to his leadership. Driscoll made the correlation to what Nehemiah had to do in taking action against a rebellious and complacent people. See Mark Driscoll, "Fathers and Fighting" *Sermon Audio, Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 15 Nov. 2007]. Online: http://www.marshillchurch.org/media/nehemiah?page=2.

[86] Janet I. Tu, "Pastor Mark Packs 'Em In,'" *The Seattle Times,* n.p. [cited 14 Mar. 2008]. Online: http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/cgi-bin/PrintStory.pl?document_id=2001795724&slug=p.

[87] Driscoll, quoted in Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 144.

[88] The resource for this paragraph on Driscoll's view of a constant message and a changing method is Mark Driscoll, "An Interview with Mark Driscoll," interview by Adrian Warnock, *Adrian Warnock's Blog*, n.p. [cited 17 July, 2007]. Online: http://www.adrianwarnock.com/2006/04/interview-with-mark-driscoll_02.htm.

Change in method and translation is inevitable, argues Driscoll, in order to contend for the faith among diverse and changing cultures. A culturally appropriated message requires a culturally articulated form. The change, however, does not apply to the message. Guarding against dead orthodoxy (unchanging doctrine and practice) and living heresy (continual change in both beliefs and methods), Driscoll opts for living orthodoxy by holding on to unchanging doctrine wedded to constantly changing methods. Thus, his reformed message remains constant (Jude 3), while his delivery enjoys the freedom of not being bound to the same timeless rules (1 Cor 9:22–23).

Despite the constant change in methods in order to be culturally relevant, Driscoll's preaching methodology does present one fixed trait that remains an essential element to his delivery.[89] Expositional heralding might represent the best term by which to express this core conviction. As the mentality discussion disclosed, Driscoll affirms an expositional philosophy when dealing with the text.

John Stott's definition of expository preaching might well capture Driscoll's conviction. Arguing that exposition has a "much broader meaning" than normally ascribed to it, Stott writes that expository preaching "refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view."[90] He continues, "The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical. What matters is what we do with it. . . . our responsibility as expositors is to open it up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, relevantly. . . ."[91] With this in mind, it is then understandable and explainable as to how Driscoll incorporates more methods (though used sparingly) in his delivery than merely the standard approach to expository preaching, which for him consists of preaching through complete books of the

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[89] Driscoll holds a clear distinction between relativism and relevantism. He argues for being relevant meaning "doctrinal principles remain in a closed hand and cultural methods remain in an open hand." The open hand of relevantism means holding loosely methods and styles for ministry that need to be adapted to culture as it changes. Closed handed doctrinal principles means there is no room for change or negotiation—*solas* of the Reformation are maintained. See Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 143.

[90] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982; repr., 1997), 125.

[91] Ibid., 126.

Bible, line by line and chunks at a time.[92] Textual (doctrinal), topical, and narrative represent the various additional methods he incorporates, yet all with an expositional mentality so that he stays true to his homiletical and hermeneutical convictions in seeking to proclaim the truth of Scripture, as discovered in its original context.[93]

No matter the expositional method, the length of Driscoll's message typically stays the same, which represents the second methodological observation. Upwards of an hour or even an hour and a half is typical, with his longest sermon coming in at one hour and forty minutes—without notes.[94] Although Scripture does not directly speak to the issue of sermon length, Driscoll embraces the occasional examples of Jesus or Paul preaching long sermons (Matt 15:29–31; Acts 20:7–11).[95] He also classifies this extended sermon trend with young reformed preachers in contrast to seeker or purpose-type evangelical churches who tend to shut down the message within the half hour.[96] Besides the benefit of allowing Driscoll and the audience time to dwell deeply in the text and

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[92] Driscoll's primary preaching method is expository preaching (footnote 56), which he describes as "going through a book of the Bible verse by verse." See Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture." The Mars Hill Church website states that preaching through books of the Bible is the primary method with an occasional series thrown in between Bible books. The series are either topical, theological, practical, or driven by a particular holiday. See the Mars Hill Church sermon menu online: http://media.marshillchurch.org/home.html. "Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe" is an example of a theological or doctrinal series preached by Driscoll. Doctrinal topics covered included the following: The Trinity, Revelation, Creation, Image, Fall, Covenant, Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, Church, Worship, Stewardship, and Kingdom. A topical series, "Religion Saves and 9 Other Misconceptions," reflected Driscoll's creative side, which tackled the top nine questions asked of him through a web site voting process. Sermon questions addressed included topics such as: dating, predestination, humor, birth control, and the emerging church.

[93] For a description of how Driscoll defines these types of preaching, see Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture." With each description he provides practical advantages or reasons for their use. In the mentality section, this work highlighted Driscoll's disdain for some aspects of trendy-narrative proclamation, however, this does not mean he does not incorporate narrative into his own preaching. A few benefits Driscoll holds for narrative proclamation include the following: the "sermon follows the storyline of the Bible story from one event to the next rather than a systematic theology approach of proposition to proposition"; "the hearer is not given the thesis up front followed by its defense but rather is taken on a journey through the story of the text through conflict, tension, and eventual resolution. This is often more gripping and memorable"; and as previously mentioned, the Bible being the Story (meta-narrative) means that preaching should always connect back to the overarching story of God. Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 91–96.

[94] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 132–33. Over time Driscoll has learned to preach without notes trusting in the Holy Spirit to direct his specific words during the heralding event. Although this is his primary method, he does use an outline or notes occasionally when he believes it will enable him to do the best job. His advice to Acts 29 church planters is to "junk your notes and go with the Ghost . . . sometimes." See Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture."

[95] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture."

[96] Ibid.

context, his lengthy messages, delivered multiple times each Sunday, offer a great opportunity for him to develop and refine his preaching delivery—if it does not kill him.[97] The combined length of his sermons, and the numerous opportunities on a given Sunday to deliver them, seems to have enabled him to figure preaching out. In his own words, "Preaching is like driving a clutch, and the only way to figure it out is to keep grinding the gears and stalling until you figure it out."[98] Evidently, based on his preaching method having commandeered national interest—as the key to his draw—and the growth of Mars Hill pressing into the thousands, it does appear that he has figured something out, with the length of his sermons, rather than being a distraction, being an added bonus.[99]

What is it about Driscoll's method of delivery that enables him to sustain a Sunday crowd for an uncommonly extended period of time?[100] Unpacking his commanding and often controversial style of delivery will provide some answers and unveil homiletical observation number three. Conversational, comedic, and confrontational provide a fairly complete descriptive framework by which to assess Driscoll's style. First, Driscoll's delivery connects in a personable way as if he is interacting in a conversation with his listeners, yet never at the risk of disconnecting from his prophetic edge. As one writer describes him, he is "like a persuasive friend, cajoling, chiding," and "throwing in sarcastic jabs."[101] His personal transparency, which allows his church to see how the Word has changed and challenged his life, as he talks about personal sins, flaws, and struggles, aids this conversational approach. It makes him approachable—revealing his humanness, humbleness, and need to live under Scripture.[102] Likewise, his reformissional *pathos*, which

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[97] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 133. Driscoll preaches multiples times on Sundays. In an earlier season in the life of Mars Hill, he preached anywhere from six to nine hours on Sunday, which he claims "nearly killed me."

[98] Ibid.

[99] Tu, "Pastor Mark Packs 'Em In.'"

[100] Mars Hill includes four major aspects to their worship services, which lends itself to a two hour event, "not unlike a big concert or movie." The four aspects include singing, communion, praying, and preaching, with preaching being the hinge or hub of the service having everything evolve around it. See Driscoll, *Confessions*, 117.

[101] Tu, "Pastor Mark Packs 'Em In.'"

[102] Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture." "If he's wrong he will say so," commented one Mars Hill member when asked what he liked about Driscoll's preaching. During the interview by this author, the member went on to state, that Driscoll "stands on the Word while also placing himself under the Word." In addition, "he places himself in accountability to others." See Mark Driscoll, "The Rebels Guide to Joy in Humility," *Sermon Audio, Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 10 Jan. 2008]. Online: http://www.marshillchurch.org/media/rebels-guide-to-joy, for an open apology

drives him to understand the culture in which he preaches, lends itself to becoming proficient at communicating in ways that connect personally with the listener.[103]

Confrontational, which may on the surface appear contradictory with Driscoll's ability to communicate conversationally, is, nonetheless, a definitive attribute of his delivery style. His sharp tongue, brutal forthrightness, aggressive nature, and William Wallace II tenacity in heralding the gospel comes with a price, but it is an intentional price Driscoll is more than willing to pay.[104] With "stick it in your face"[105] combative deliberateness, Driscoll believes that "one of the most important things I can do is agitate people to the point where they start to investigate."[106] His intentional prodding, delivered with street fighter doggedness, often comes in the form of ranting that offers hard teaching with a high shock and awe value.[107] Driscoll, clearly in tune with his masculinity and Puritan influence, acknowledges that the Puritans held that "the same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay."[108] Therefore, believing that "soft words produce hard people," and "hard words produce soft people," he aims to force his listeners to deal with

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to Mars Hill Church for omitting biblical humility as a trait in his Christian walk and leadership of the church. Driscoll stated, "I apologize for not having demonstrated and articulated humility as the Scriptures would require."

[103] See Driscoll, *Reformission*, 91–111, for a full discussion on understanding culture. Driscoll remarks, "The better we understand culture, the better prepared we will be to reach that culture so that God can transform how people think, what they value, and how they experience life" (98). Mars Hill uses technology as one means to communicate in the language of the present culture. During some sermons, Driscoll receives questions from the audience through text messaging. He then addresses the questions at the end of his message.

[104] Driscoll references William Wallace II as portrayed in the movie *Braveheart*, with the implication of one who was willing to stand his ground and fight for what is right and truthful. Driscoll has preached in a protective bullet-proof vest on a given occasion, had people show up at his house wanting to re-arrange his face, and still has people walk out during his preaching—flipping him off as they depart. See Driscoll, *Confessions*, 134. Some of this insight was gained first hand through an interview with a member of the Mars Hill security.

[105] Gerry Breshears, quoted in Collin Hansen, "Pastor Provacateur," *Christianity Today* (Sept., 2007): 47. Breshears, commenting about Driscoll's delivery style, said that "'he offends everybody'" and "'if Jesus says it, I'm gonna stick it in your face. Get used to it.'" He continues, "'But that's part of what people respond to. Here's a guy who stands up, opens his Bible, and says, 'Dude, this is it.' When he says, 'Dude,' he turns off a whole lot of folks. And when he says, 'this is it,' he turns off a lot of folks.'"

[106] Tu, "Driscoll Packs 'Em In.'"

[107] Hansen reports about Driscoll blowing out his voice due to an intense atonement screaming rant during multiple services on a given Sunday in 2006 on which he "bludgeoned the congregation with a graphic description of Jesus' death." To Driscoll's surprise, the church grew by 800 the next Sunday. See Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed,* 143. Driscoll often refers to his preaching as ranting.

[108] Driscoll, quoted in Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 140.

truth, rather than allow them to walk away indifferent.[109] If it takes confrontation to accomplish this aim—for Jesus—then so be it.

Comedy for the purpose of theological persuasion became a staple of Driscoll's homiletical discourses during the early launch days of Mars Hill. Working at finding his own homiletical rhythm, he writes that upon preaching weekly, "I figured out my own style and started to include my own peculiar sarcasm" and "in time . . . began to use my humor to make my points, which allowed my personality to finally come through in the sermons."[110] To complement his comedic upbringing and natural bent toward edgy sarcasm, he took his communication lead from studying stand-up comedians like Chris Rock along with legendary preachers such as Martyn Lloyd Jones and Charles Haddon Spurgeon—a rare and peculiar trio indeed.[111] Although the edge of his humor has toned down a bit from these early years, he still offers what some consider a "Chris Rock of conservative Christianity" flare.[112] Some have praised his use of edgy language; others have despised it.[113]

However, whether one agrees with his humor or not, what is undisputable is his use of it to draw crowds and hold an audience's attention in proclaiming Christ. As one Mars Hill member stated, "Mark is the first pastor that I don't nod off during the messages and he preaches for a long time."[114] Sampling a snippet of his smart-aleck and pithy remarks might just reveal why. Referring to the sweltering heat of one of their early buildings he remarked, "The church was so hot that everyone was sweating like

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 70.

[111] Driscoll grew up on comedians such as Eddie Murphy, George Carlin, and Sam Kinison. See Tu, "Driscoll Packs 'Em In.'" He recommends that preachers study stand-up comics to aid in learning how to communicate. His recommendations are Dave Chappelle, Carlos Mencia, and, as mentioned above, Chris Rock. See Driscoll, "Preaching & Teaching Jesus from Scripture." Additional preachers and theologians who have influenced Driscoll's preaching include John Stott, Francis Schaeffer, J.I. Packer, Charles Colson, Billy Graham, D. A. Carson, Wayne Grudem, John Piper, and John MacArthur, of whom he listened to hundreds of his sermon tapes, early in his ministry. See Hansen, "Pastor Provocateur," 47, 49.

[112] Tu, "Driscoll Packs 'Em In.'"

[113] His friend and writing partner Gary Breshears, says, "Mark is talking to twenty-somethings, for whom trash talk is their normal language," but, he adds, "what he's saying in trash talk is pure Bible." See Gary Breshears, quoted in Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 145.

[114] Quote by a Mars Hill Church member who serves as a small group community leader. This statement was received during a personal interview by this author during a visit to Mars Hill Church.

Mike Tyson in a spelling bee."[115] Commenting on the surprise and shock of him preaching on humility he stated, the next thing you know "we will have Britney Spears in here teaching a parenting seminar."[116] Driscoll is undoubtedly quick witted and funny and if the listener thinks not, he really does not care—the joke is on you.[117]

Conclusion

This completes the investigation of Driscoll's message, mentality, and methods for preaching within the emerging church, or at least within the emerging culture of Seattle. A summary of the findings, derived from his writings, messages, and this author's personal observations, are stated below.

The message spotlighted Driscoll's homiletical convictions about Scripture and the gospel. As an entrenched devoted Biblicist, Driscoll argues that the Scripture has been divinely delivered to man from God. It is the central purpose of Scripture to reveal the finished work and person of the God-man, Jesus Christ. And, because of its divine author and having no mistakes, he trust and submits himself under the Bible as the full and final rule of authority for his life and the life of his church. The gospel for Driscoll is as decisively clear as his convictions about Scripture. Scripture exists to reveal the glory of Jesus' redemptive work, thus, the gospel is about the glory of Jesus' redemptive work on the

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[115] Driscoll, *Confessions*, 38. Driscoll used this remark in the opening minutes of one of his Nehemiah sermons. He referenced how hot and sweaty he was that night and then launched into the joke, just prior to having prayer for his message.

[116] Driscoll, "The Rebels Guide to Joy in Humility."

[117] Driscoll often jests with the audience in his sermons that he knows he is funny even if they do not. Sometimes he might pause during a message to acknowledge something funny he has stated. Other examples of Driscoll's humor/sarcasm include the following: when referring to some immature men he counseled, he writes, "Everyone of them was older than me, a chronic masturbator, a porn addict, banging weak-willed girls like a screen door in a stiff breeze," see Driscoll, *Confessions*, 128; acknowledging the influence of a pastor he sat under, he wrote, "He taught through the Bible verse by verse, so that I could learn to trust the Scriptures and to love Jesus without feeling like we had a thinly veiled homosexual relationship," see Driscoll, *Reformission*, 14; speaking of a prejudice he had to repent of, he wrote, "I used to not like men with ridiculously hairy ears and noses, because it looks like they snorted a cat, and I hate cats," see Driscoll, *Reformission*, 76; and last, writing about his salvation experience, he stated, "I realized that God had been pursing me and was, in that moment, screaming into the three pounds of meat between my ears that I belong to Jesus," see Driscoll, *Reformission*, 13. His books and sermons are filled with snappy one-liners and funny anecdotes. See "Question 8: Humor," *Sermon Audio, Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 10 Sept. 2008]. Online: http://www.marshillchurch.org/media/religionsaves/humor, for a message that covers Driscoll's biblical view of humor and the reasons he incorporates it in his preaching.

cross. In essence, Driscoll is a 1 Cor 15:1–8 Pauline soldier, who has planted his flag in Seattle, fighting for and proclaiming the same succinct message (1 Cor 2:2; Col 1:28). The simple truth that mankind is sinful, God is holy, and God despises sin, sound the battle cry for the core of Driscoll's gospel. Yet the final facet to this core, which trumpets the hope of his message, is that God provides deliverance and victory from bondage through the finished work of Jesus at Calvary. Salvation from God's wrath is the good news for Driscoll and the one story of the Bible.

The mentality section unfolded six facets about Driscoll's preaching philosophy. Expositional preparation and proclamation presented the first facet and established the homiletical and hermeneutical foundation from which all the other five facets were derived. Preaching as authoritative monologue, with an understanding of the church and its mission, and with a vision of the big overarching narrative, which always points to the redemptive story of Jesus as the hero, are all derived from a proper *exegeting* of the text, in context.

Method, probably the most colorful of the three, presented Driscoll's means of communicating. Three observations identified his delivery practices. First, contextualizing the gospel message requires change and adaptation to culture; second, drive-by sermons—be it topical, doctrinal, or narrative—does not cut it, parking in the text is a must; and third, preaching conversationally with a comedic, confrontational edge draws people in to hear and see the glory of the message—Jesus.

This concludes the assessment of not only Driscoll's homiletical convictions but also each of the selected emerging church preachers. With each individual assessment complete, this work will now proceed forward to assessing their preaching in light of biblical revelation, but not before providing a collective summary and comparative analysis of all four.

CHAPTER 8
EMERGING CHURCH PREACHING: SUMMARY AND COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF IDENTIFIED PREACHING TRAITS

Introduction

The homiletical descriptions provided in the previous four chapters represent the preaching ministries of four prominent leaders within the emerging church. Yet, because of the growing size and diversity within the emerging church, it would be misleading to claim that their preaching represents the entire movement. However, it is fair to suggest, based on the diverse emerging streams of which they represent, that their identified preaching practices do, if not in whole at least in part, provide a significant sample of the type of homiletical discourse being practiced. To aid further in evaluating their preaching practices within the movement, this brief chapter will provide two more resources: first, a condensed, one page summary of the homiletical beliefs of each preacher; and second, a comparative analysis examining similarities and differences between the selected preachers in relationship to their identified preaching beliefs and practices.

Emerging Church Preachers: Condensed Homiletical Summary

The condensed homiletical summary of the four emerging church preachers presents, in chart form, a review of their homiletical beliefs concerning the three preaching categories: message, mentality, and method. The content of the charts is derived from the corresponding chapter pertaining to each preacher.[1]

[1] Please refer to the appropriate corresponding chapter (s) (4, 5, 6, or 7) for specific material references. When possible, each preacher's actual wording has been utilized, yet quote marks have been omitted, complete sentences have at times been reduced, and occasional paraphrasing has been incorporated for condensing the material into chart form.

See also appendix 4 for a side-by-side homiletical comparison. A side-by-side homiletical comparison presents, in chart form, a review of each preacher's beliefs, one category per page, arranged side by side for quick and easy comparison. The content of these charts duplicates the exact material taken from the condensed homiletical summary.

Figure 1: The Homiletic of Brian McLaren

	Message (Theology)	Mentality (Philosophy)	Methods
HOMILETIC CATEGORIES	The Bible - Reasons for the Bible's poor reputation: It is wrongly understood as the foundational end all how-to manual for life having been reduced to a divine storehouse of propositions, which depletes it of its intrigue and mystery. - The Bible is an inspired family story, not an authoritative story, which is a modern conception of 2 Tim 3:16-17. Authority resides with God and the community, not within the text/original author. - The primary problem with modern interpretation of Scripture is an over-realized hermeneutical fixation with analysis. A holistic interpretive approach presents the solution, which includes: seeing propositions from a missional/action vantage point; embracing dialogue, conversation, and intrigue in the interpretive process (clarity is not the end all); seeing the big story and yourself in its ongoing trajectory; revering mysteries; listening to marginalized interpreters; and prizing the questioning of the Bible. The Gospel - Vacillates between the irreducible elements of the gospel (1 Cor 15) and the gospel as the kingdom of God—an inclusive social revolution of personal and global healing/ transformation. The orthodox gospel position has been relegated to footnote status.	- The top preaching priority is to accommodate postmodernism, which requires a new rhetoric. Components of this new communication genre include: - Embrace mystery. Tone down certainty and claims of authority, allowing space for skepticism, suspicion, and the unknown. - Represent a posture of humility, not an arrogant modern know-it-all answer man with pithy proof-text arguments. - Communicate with a *poetic voice*, which means taking the tone of a lover/artist, not lawyer/salesmen. Speak with more intuition, wonder, awe, and wildness, instead of abstract, systematic, scientific rhetoric. - Create a preaching environment for dialogue. Instead of imposing upon the listener, make the sermonic event a collaborative effort and/or communicate by mirroring the flow of a conversation. - Create experiences within the preaching event through the sharing of stories, meditation, and other lived/practiced methods. - Community matters in preaching—it serves as the greatest hermeneutic and explanation for the gospel. - Art represents one primary way that postmoderns learn. Seek to preach incorporating music, drama, and visuals.	- Abductive preaching- seizing people through imagination and transporting them from their world to another world where they gain new insights/perspectives. The aim is to compose experiences not sermon points and principles. The elements of surprise and unpredictability, by means of utilizing metaphors, problems, questions, puzzles, shock, and astonishing stories, are two key facets of this method. - Abductive-narrative proclamation- is story telling in an abductive way—in the way of Jesus. Three reasons for narrative methodology: it represents the best means to communicate truth to postmoderns, it focuses on honoring historical context, and it speaks the language of postmoderns. - Avoid versification. Do not strip-mine the text for abstract propositions to the neglect of the story/meta-narrative. Allow the trajectory of the biblical story to speak. Preach the grand movements of Scripture in the raw, uncut, unedited version. - Preachers share their stories to present illustrations of the truth. Communicate authenticity, honesty, and transparency. Incorporate art by showing movie clips, creating drama with biblical themes, and creating new art as part of the sermon event.

Figure 2: The Homiletic of Doug Pagitt

	Message (Theology)	Mentality (Philosophy)	Methods
HOMILETIC CATEGORIES	The Bible - Not to be understood or used as a literal weapon, reference book, encyclopedia, or memorized playbook. The aim is to guard against *eisegesis* and selective quoting of Scripture that ignores historical context and original communities of faith. -Rejects inerrancy and redefines the orthodox view of inspiration. Inspired Scripture projects the notion of God or hints of God speaking as an active voice in partnership with humanity, not the literal words of God. The Bible is to be understood as full narrative; each part is connected to the bigger story. - The community of faith represents the locus of biblical authority. Interpretive space is needed in order to reconstruct and live out the message/story for the emerging culture. The Gospel - Rejects orthodox gospel: doctrine of original sin and subsequent separation, God as judge over sin, Jesus as Savior from sin (propitiation), and substitutionary atonement. - Re-imagined gospel: uninterrupted integration and co-creation with God, down-and-in (personal) God, and Jesus as revolutionary who provides hope for a healed world of love and peace.	- Rejects traditional preaching; renames it speaching, the style of preaching that is hardly distinguishable from a one way speech. - Reasons for its dismissal: ineffective means of communication that creates a relationship problem with the audience, silences the voice of the community, and stifles experience and participation—the very means of spiritual formation for an emerging culture. - Re-imagines preaching as progressional dialogue where the content of the message is created within the context of community. - Implicatory preaching, which aims at allowing participants to see themselves in the unfolding story of God, replaces generic messages with assumed application points—an approach that does little to foster relationships. - A community dialogical approach to preaching loosens the control of the message from a predetermined few, allowing for new emerging messages from a community of preachers, not a single holder of truth.	- Community based sermon preparation. Incorporates mid-week sermon discussion group for crafting the form, feel, and content of the message. - Delivers sermon in a roundtable forum. The audience is invited to share ideas, interpretations, and feelings about the message. Substantive changes in the message are created as a result of this interactive exchange during the sermonic event. - The preacher's role is to facilitate a proper environment for spiritual formation through community dialogue during the sermon. - Progressional methodology includes: setting the parameters for sermon discussion; establishing the right posture/tone of voice; developing an art for improvisation; discarding sermon notes to improve spontaneity, fluidity and openness toward participation; releasing authority to the community; and using provisional language to encourage group interaction. - Preaching is secondary to relationships lived out in community.

Figure 3: The Homiletic of Dan Kimball

	Message (Theology)	Mentality (Philosophy)	Methods
HOMILETIC CATEGORIES	The Bible - Not to be understood as an answer-everything book, how-to-manual, textbook, or auto manual. Scorns proof-texting and interpretations void of historical context. - Three reasons for maintaining a conviction about Scripture: Jesus placed a high value on Scripture; the Scripture claims it is the means to know and love God; and Scripture is inspired. Therefore, Scripture is an authoritative guide for life—in like fashion to a compass. - The Bible is also like an anchor—secure and immovable on essential truths yet free to drift in areas of non-essentials. - Implements a hermeneutic of humility that acknowledges the reality of human error in interpretation and a hermeneutic with narrative lenses that places the interpreter within the big story—seeking to understand the cultural and historical context. The Gospel - Understands the pure gospel to be represented by 1 Cor 15: 3-4. Holds to an orthodox view of substitutionary atonement. - Holistic faith consists of eternal life and an invitation to experience life today.	- Places a high importance on preacher *ethos*—humility and dependence on God. - Preaching is a critical part of the emerging church's mission. - Preaching is proclaiming the story of God and humans, the good news of the kingdom. Preachers need to become story tellers again. - The meta-narrative in proclamation matters. Sermons need to reflect how the particular text/subject fits into the grand narrative of the biblical story. - The starting point for preaching to a post-Christian/emerging culture is the beginning of the story, not the middle. - Preachers need to accommodate the postmodern mindset by providing biblical substance in sermons, biblical depth (word studies/historical context) to challenging questions, teaching theology, returning to theocentric instead of anthropocentric proclamation, and aiming for experiencing God's truth instead of limiting it to propositional/fill in the blank messages of His truth. - Define terms in preaching. Reconstruct Christian sub-culture terminology. Create space for learning by interaction and dialogue.	- Theotopical- a method that blends expository and topical preaching. Incorporates a defined theological theme expressed through a blending of propositional truth with a meta-narrative explanation of the biblical message. - Participatory-interactive-holistic teaching. The central Bible theme, emphasized through multi-sensory mediums (arts, visuals, testimonies, and prayer stations), takes center stage with the message preached with words in order to create multiple experiences for learning, transformation, and ultimately encountering God. This holistic method is also referred to as wordless preaching. - Create space for dialogue. This allows for sermon interaction, questioning, and thinking in context of community. Dialogue opportunities might include: open forums following the sermon, group think tanks to deal with difficult passages/ biblical topics, and e-mail discussions. - Incorporate inclusive language ("we" instead of "you") in preaching. This models the preacher being on journey to-gether with the church instead of merely being the message giver and problem solver.

Figure 4: The Homiletic of Mark Driscoll

	Message (Theology)	Mentality (Philosophy)	Methods
HOMILETIC CATEGORIES	The Bible - God's divine revelation to man. Inerrant, true, trustworthy, perfect, flawless—the very words of God. What the Bible says is what God says. - The purpose of Scripture is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. He is the centerpiece of Scripture; the thread that weaves it all together. Proper understanding of Scripture is how one comes to know and love Jesus. - The Bible is authoritative, the metaphorical Supreme Court of final authority. Lower courts of authority such as tradition, experience, and science are valued, yet placed beneath Scripture. Scripture is the best tool for interpreting Scripture and hermeneutical integrity is maintained by approaching the Bible from a grammatical, historical, and theological investigation of the text—seeking to discover the original intent of the author. The Gospel - It is the heart of Scripture. 1 Cor 15:1-8 provides the succinct message of the gospel—Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection to save sinners. - Mankind is sinful. God is holy, despises sin, and provides the means for forgiveness through the person and finished work of Jesus—substitutionary atonement.	- Preaching is central to the church and the central aim (and content) of preaching is to exalt Jesus as the hero, Savior, and center-piece of Scripture. - Expositional preaching, exposing and explaining the original meaning of the text, presents the best means to proclaim Christ. - Preach with authority by staying true to the text/authorial intent. - Preach by means of monologue, not dialogue, for the corporate worship gathering. Dialogical preaching stems from a low view of Scripture and a disdain for biblical authority. Welcome dialogue and interaction as part of small group Bible studies. - Preaching is linked to ecclesiology. The church exists because of preaching—God being the example from Genesis to Revelation. Therefore, a church without preaching is not a church. - Preaching is linked to missiology. Three missiological sermon framing questions include: Why do we resist the truth? Why does this matter? And, how is Jesus the hero/Savior? -Preach the Bible as The Story or metanarrative. Explain how each message fits within the grand story of redemption. Allow the genre of Scripture to determine sermon structure.	- Preaching methods change, doctrine remains unchanged. A culturally appropriated message requires a culturally articulated form. - Expositional proclamation, explaining what is in the text line by line and chunks at a time (typically preaching through entire books of the Bible) represents the overarching method, which can be expressed in different forms such as textual, topical, and narrative. Regardless of the form, an expositional mentality must be maintained—seeking to honor and explain authorial intent in context. - Sermon length averages one hour, typically without notes. - Conversational preaching. Connect in a personal way without loosing a prophetic edge. Be transparent; acknowledge personal sins and areas of struggle. Understand the language of the culture in order to effectively communicate. - Use confrontation for the purpose of challenging people to deal with truth. Be deliberate, tenacious, and pointed. - Use comedy to gain attention, teach, and persuade people about Jesus. Engage people with the gospel by utilizing your individual personality/gifts.

Emerging Church Preachers: Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis presents an evaluation of the homiletical beliefs of each preacher covering an extensive list of preaching traits derived from the homiletical material presented in chapters four through seven. The purpose of this analysis is to identity homiletical similarities and differences among the selected emerging church preachers. A check system of zero to three presents the means by which to demonstrate this data. Zero, or the absence of a check(s), means no association, limited interest, or disagreement with a given preaching position. The scale then increases in support by the number of assigned checks, with a range from one to three. The scale might read in the following manner: one check means somewhat agree, two checks means agree, and three checks represents strong agreement.[2] This check system is not to be read in absolute terms. Rather, it is best to be understood as a guide in helping to discern the basic homiletical direction, convictions, and practices of each preacher.[3]

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[2] The check system could also be termed as emphasizing the priority placed upon a certain belief. E.g. McLaren states he believes in the orthodox/traditional position of the gospel, yet he also has relegated this gospel position to a footnote status, thus receiving one check instead of three.

[3] There are obvious inherent weaknesses of this type of analysis, two of which will be addressed here. First, as with much of the emerging church writings, re-imagining, deconstructing, re-defining, and reconstructing the meaning of terms is the norm. Therefore, how one emerging church preacher defines a specific preaching characteristic might well differ from another. The inspiration of the Bible provides one case in point. All four preachers claim belief in the inspiration of Scripture, yet their definitions of inspiration differs considerably—specifically when examining McLaren and Pagitt's beliefs with that of Kimball and Driscoll.

The second weakness involves the subjective nature of such an analysis. Although avoiding this concern is improbable, this author has sought to make evaluations based on specific, identifiable, and documented beliefs presented by each preacher. When a reference or information was not available, a judgment decision was made based on all the collective research evaluated for each preacher. It is also important to note that many emerging church preachers disparage the use of lists, labels or categorizing of the movement, thus making this analysis even more challenging. Furthermore, it has already been shown that some of the chosen preachers share their beliefs with purposeful ambiguity and uncertainty, often vacillating between positions. Thus, finding supporting documentation that argues exceptions to this author's conclusions is probable.

Figure 5: Homiletical Comparative Analysis: Message

Emerging Church Preachers Homiletical Message	McLaren	Pagitt	Kimball	Driscoll
The Bible				
The Bible as Propositions/Eternal Unchanging Timeless Truths	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
The Bible Rejected as a How-To Manual for Life	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
The Bible as the Foundation of Truth			✓✓	✓✓✓
The Bible Gains Authority from Community	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		
The Bible Gains Authority from God	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Bible as the Supreme Authoritative Source for Life			✓✓	✓✓✓
The Bible as Inerrant			✓	✓✓✓
The Bible as Inspired.	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Bible as Mystery	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
The Bible as Narrative/Poetry/Story	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
The Bible Interpreted by a Redemptive/Trajectory Hermeneutic	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
The Bible Interpreted by a Hermeneutic of Humility	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
The Bible Interpreted: Grammatical/Historical/ Theological	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Gospel				
The Gospel as Social/Political Reform/ Ending Global Injustices	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
The Gospel as the Kingdom of God on Earth	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
The Gospel as Conversation/Participation, not Conversion	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		
The Gospel as Inclusive/Universal/ Multiperspectivalism	✓✓	✓✓✓		
The Gospel as a Work of Divine Grace	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
The Gospel as Jesus' Death/Burial/Resurrection to Save Sinners	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Gospel as Vicarious Substitutionary Atonement	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Gospel as the Exclusivity of Jesus for Eternal Salvation	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓
The Gospel as Represented by 1 Cor 15:3-4/Eph 2:8-9/John 14:6	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓

Figure 6: Homiletical Comparative Analysis: Mentality

Emerging Church Preachers Homiletical Mentality (Philosophy)	McLaren	Pagitt	Kimball	Driscoll
Preaching as Dialogue/Conversation	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching that Celebrates the Mystery of God	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Preaching with a Posture of Uncertainty, Skepticism, & Suspicion	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching the Metanarrative/ Grand Story of Scripture	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching to Accommodate Postmodernism/Emerging Culture	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Preaching with an Understanding of Culture and Context	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching with Transparency, Authenticity, & Openness	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching Expositionally	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching as a Herald with a Prophetic Edge			✓	✓✓✓
Preaching with Authority and Certainty	✓		✓	✓✓✓
Preaching Missiologically/Engaging Culture & Community	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching Seen as a Primary/Central Task of the Church	✓		✓	✓✓✓
Preaching as a Contrarian/Prize Questions Over Answers	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching that Allows for a Postmodern Trajectory of Scripture	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching Incarnationally, the Way of Jesus—the Man	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Preaching the Deity of Jesus—The God-Man	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching Without Words—The Church in Action	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Preaching with Implication: Participate in Writing God's Story	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching with Application: Applying God's Truths to Life	✓		✓	✓✓✓

Figure 7: Homiletical Comparative Analysis: Method

Emerging Church Preachers Homiletical Method	McLaren	Pagitt	Kimball	Driscoll
Preaching in a Conversational Style	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
Preaching as a Conversation/Progressional Dialogue	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching as a Facilitator	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
Preaching as Monologue	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching as Abductive Narrative	✓✓✓	✓✓		
Preaching as Narrative/Story Tellers	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Preaching with the Use of Personal Stories/Illustrations	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Preaching as Multi-Sensory/Participatory Experiences	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
Preaching with Opportunities for Dialogue/Q &A	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Preaching Confrontationally		✓	✓	✓✓✓
Preaching as a Roundtable Discussion	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	
Preaching with the Use of Principles and Propositions	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Preaching with Humor	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
Preaching Preparation as a Team Event/ Thematic Collaboration	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓ ✓	
Preaching Longer Sermons (One Hour or Longer)			✓	✓✓✓
Preaching without Notes	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
Preaching through Books of the Bible	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓
Preaching through Books of the Bible/Verse by Verse			✓	✓✓✓
Preaching Topical Messages	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide condensed reviews and comparative analysis of the homiletical beliefs and practices of the four chosen emerging church preachers. Seven observations have emerged from these summaries and comparisons, which will now provide the closing remarks for this chapter and thus conclude the second part of this work. First, no two emerging church preachers hold identical homiletical beliefs across the given three fold criteria of the message, mentality, and methods. Second, the most distinct differences among the emerging preachers appear in the area of theology or message (Bible and gospel).[4] Third, the difference in their message (theology) equally translates to differences in their philosophy and methodology of preaching.[5]

The fourth homiletical observation identifies three similarities whereby each preacher stands in agreement. Two of these categories highlight the proverbial importance of culture. First, preaching should have a missiological focus—engaging culture and community with the message—which means, second, an understanding of culture and context is needed in order to minister effectively. The third area of agreement (at least by rating, not necessarily by individual definition), emphasizes the need to preach the grand story/metanarrative of Scripture.

Observation number five reveals a correlation between expositional preaching and the message (Bible and gospel) when an orthodox/traditional position is held. The sixth observation highlights the similarities between McLaren's orthodoxy and orthopraxy with Pagitt's, along with the like-mindedness between Kimball's homiletical positions with that of Driscoll's, yet not with

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[4]The emergent stream, represented by McLaren and Pagitt, presents the furthest distance from an orthodox/traditional view of Scripture and the gospel. Pagitt seems to have abandoned this position all together, while McLaren vacillates between the two—orthodox/emergent. The relevant reformed tribe, represented by Driscoll, maintains a tight alignment with the orthodox/traditional position on Scripture and the gospel, while Kimball, representing the relevant camp, presents the centrist position that holds to the orthodox/traditional position, yet with some sensibilities/leanings toward emergent beliefs and practices.

[5]E.g. McLaren and Pagitt reside in the same camp theologically and reflect a homiletical likeness for dialogical/conversational proclamation as part of their preaching philosophy and methodology. In contrast, Driscoll maintains an orthodox theological position with a preaching philosophy and methodology bent toward monologue and heralding propositionally. Kimball, being the centrist, reflects more of a blend between the two parties mentioned above. Therefore, it has been discovered that the greater the differences between theological positions among these emerging preachers, the greater the differences between their preaching philosophy and methodology.

the same consistency. Although each of these preachers consider themselves emerging (albeit defined differently), it is doubtful they would welcome being classified together, maybe by the duo associations presented above, but not collectively as a unified preaching team.[6]

This leads the discussion to the seventh and final observation. Based on the differences between the chosen preachers in the areas of preaching philosophy, methodology, and theology, it would be errant to classify all emerging church preachers as the same. Analyzing the emerging church from a single stream perspective and then casting those findings on the entire movement would be a disservice to the Christian cause.[7] A balanced assessment is needed that addresses each stream and each preacher(s) by its and his own merits. It will be the aim of part three of this work to provide such an assessment by highlighting both preaching weaknesses and strengths—for the benefit and protection of the church.

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[6]Pagitt and Driscoll present the greatest polarity among the four selected preachers. McLaren and Pagitt are the most alike of the four, while Kimball falls more in the middle, with a stronger leaning toward the same homiletical convictions as Driscoll.

[7]At this stage in the movement, an overly confident categorization of preachers or emerging streams could do more harm than good. See Michael Patton, "Would the Real Emerger Please Stand Up?" *Reclaiming the Mind Website*, n.p. [cited 30 August, 2008]. Online: www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2008/08/will-the-real-emerger-please-stand-up/.

PART 3
PREACHING AND THE EMERGING CHURCH: CONTENDING WITH BIBLICAL REVELATION

Part one provided an introduction to the emerging church movement and four of its key leaders. Part two presented a descriptive overview of each preacher's homiletical beliefs in relationship to their message (theology), mentality (philosophy), and methods, along with a comparative analysis that revealed close similarities and distinct differences between them. In this final section, part three, a critique of their preaching practices will commence based on the homiletical insights gained thus far from the prior two sections.

The critique will consist of two chapters (nine and ten) that will examine both the weaknesses and strengths of the four preachers under the classification of two separate emerging church streams. The purpose of condensing this evaluation resides in the need to reduce redundancy in discussing homiletical strengths and weaknesses shared among preachers within the same emerging stream.

The two streams and their respective preachers are as follows: the emerging church Revisionists consist of McLaren and Pagitt; the emerging church Relevants consist of Kimball and Driscoll.[1] The pairing of these preachers does not assume that they would welcome (or outright reject) this type of categorization, nor

[1] Two reasons for classifying McLaren and Pagitt as emerging church Revisionists are as follows: first, both men are founding members of Emergent Village; second, they both share similar beliefs about Scripture, the gospel, and homiletics. Their views, in comparison to Christian orthodoxy, reveal a clear re-visioning of Christianity and in some instances biblical proclamation.

Two reasons for classifying Kimball and Driscoll as emerging church Relevants are as follows; first, both preachers share a unified view of Scripture and the gospel that has not departed from orthodox Christianity; second, they also share similarities in regard to their preaching philosophy and methodology. However, it is important to note that the pairing of Kimball and Driscoll does not fit as tightly as that of McLaren and Pagitt. Key differences exist between these preachers, despite their appropriate labeling under the banner of Relevants and/or evangelicalism. The differences between them will surface within their respective chapter. Both classifications above were based on the collective research done on each preacher, the defined streams presented in chapter two, and the comparative analysis found in chapter eight.

is it meant to imply their homiletical beliefs and practices are homogeneous.[2] Any significant differences among the preachers within the given two categories will be highlighted when warranted in order to respect their individual views.

Important precursor information needed for reading both chapters of homiletical critique includes the following two items. First, the evaluation will be based on an assessment of Scripture from the tenets of historic, Protestant, Evangelical, orthodoxy.[3] Additionally, support will be drawn from the works of homileticians who likewise approach biblical proclamation from this same presupposition. Second, the critique will assume that all true biblical preaching, by nature, is expositional preaching.[4]

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[2] Two of the four emerging church preachers would probably not classify themselves in any given stream, where as Driscoll has openly referred to himself as a "Reformed Relevant" (see "Types and Streams," in chapter 2), and Kimball has recently affirmed (conceded to) Stetzer's classifications of the emerging church accepting his designation as a "Relevant." Kimball states, "Ed Stetzer has probably done a good job in wording of the primary divisions. There's a group he calls the Relevants—those who are basically evangelicals who are passionate about evangelism and not afraid to break tradition or change forms and expression of ministry, how people learn, or even ecclesiology in the sense of 'What does leadership look like?' I would personally fit in that particular realm—I don't like the word *relevant*, but that's that." See Dan Kimball, "Preaching to People Who Don't Like the Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball," interview by Michael Duduit, *Preaching* 24 (2009): 32.

[3] It is outside the scope of this work to discuss/define in length historic Protestant/Evangelical orthodoxy. However, when conversing within the context of the emerging church/postmodern dialogue, defining terms is critical. Therefore, see Michael Patton, "Would the Real Emerger Please Stand Up?" *Reclaiming the Mind Website*, n.p. [cited 30 August, 2008]. Online: www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2008/08/will-the-real-emerger-please-stand-up/, for a condensed overview of this position. Pertinent to this discussion will be basic orthodox tenets such as: the infallibility, inerrancy, and inspiration of Scripture as the final authority on all matters of faith; the gospel consisting of the fall of man (corrupt nature, imputed guilt, personal sinfulness), vicarious substitutionary atonement on the cross, and salvation by grace alone on the basis of the person and finished work/sacrifice of Christ alone.

[4] In likeness to the previous footnote, it is also outside the scope of this work to expound in length about the biblical merits of expositional preaching. However, it is important to state this presupposition up front. This position correlates with criteria number one in that if Scripture is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, then it should determine how preachers preach. In agreement with John MacArthur, "The only logical response to inerrant Scripture . . . is to preach it expositionally." See John MacArthur, "The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*, (ed. Richard Mayhue and Robert Thomas; Dallas: Word, 1992), 23.

To define expositional preaching, this work will draw from John Stott's definition, which states that expository preaching "refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor pries open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is tightly packed." See John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982; repr., 1997), 125.

Another helpful definition comes from Daniel Akin. His definition, which is more of a description of expository preaching, captures the historical and contemporary unifying characteristics of this homiletical belief and practice. He writes, "Expository preaching is text driven preaching that honors the truth of Scripture as it was given by the Holy Spirit. Discovering the God-inspired meaning through historical-grammatical-theological investigation and interpretation, the preacher, by means of engaging and compelling proclamation, explains, illustrates, and applies the meaning of the

A final note of observation, prior to launching into these closing chapters, acknowledges the concern of the emerging church about unfair critiques received from those outside the movement. Kimball asserts that many of the books or blogs written from an anti-emerging perspective often present views that are "somewhat extremist," "highly over-the-top in what they report on," include "hyper-caricatures," "mischaracterizations," and paint things from a "one-sided perspective," about beliefs within the emerging church.[5] When this happens, it is unfortunate, unbiblical, and does not help the true mission of the church. Therefore, this critique will seek to provide a fair, balanced, unbiased, yet forthright critique, which spotlights both weaknesses and strengths of the movement—specifically addressing any areas of biblical and homiletical concern that have potential to undermine the church's mission in proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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biblical text in submission to and in the power of the Holy Spirit, preaching for a verdict of changed lives." See Daniel Akin, "Truth, Inerrancy and Bible Exposition: How We Should Preach, Teach and Do Theology," *SEBTS Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Feb. 2005]. Online: http://www.sebts .edu/president/resources/viewResource.cfm?ResourceID=461&CategoryID=180.

Additional resources that explain the basic tenets of expository preaching include the following: Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); Stephen Olford and David Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1998); Richard Ramesh, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (3d ed; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999); Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1994); and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

[5] Dan Kimball, "Interesting and Ay Yi Yi," *Vintage Faith Blog*, n.p. [cited 8 April, 2008]. Online: http//www.dankimball.com/vintage_faith/2008/03/index.html.

CHAPTER 9
EMERGING CHURCH REVISIONIST: MCLAREN AND PAGITT

Introduction

Identical twins might be a stretch, but it is not too far off the mark in describing the relationship between the preaching message, mentality, and methods of McLaren and Pagitt—two emerging preachers cut from the same emergent cloth. Their collaborative efforts at Emergent Village, harmonized message about the kingdom of God, praise for each other's homiletical views, and overall preaching like-mindedness collectively affirms this conclusion.[1] Therefore, these two high profile emerging church preachers have been classified together for the purpose of critiquing their preaching practices.

The Message

As with most groupings, there will be exceptions. If there exists distinct differences between the homiletical platform of McLaren and Pagitt it might well be in the area of theology (message). However, reasonable uncertainty underlines this statement due to the purposeful uncertainty by which both men often communicate.[2]

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[1] E.g. McLaren touts Pagitt's preaching book as a classic from its initial launch. Writing the endorsement for Pagitt's *Preaching Re-Imagined* he states that "ten years from now Christian leaders around the world will be talking about preaching verses speaching and progressional dialogue." See Brian McLaren, endorsement to Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), back cover.

[2] E.g. Pagitt meanders around providing clear answers on the doctrine of hell and heaven on a radio interview with Todd Friel from *The Way of the Master*. When Friel asked, "Do you think there's an eternal damnation for people who are not Christians?" Pagitt responded with the following, "Yeah, well, I think that there's . . . I think there's all kinds of . . . I mean that, that, damnation would sort of be that . . . that there's parts of the uh, life in creation that seems to be counter to what God is doing and those are the things that are eliminated and removed and done away with. And so I think that's what damnation is, and so there's people who want to live out that kind of uhm, wanna [*sic*] have that good judgment—the judgment of God in their life. I mean you know judge . . . judgment in a biblical fashion meaning that God remakes . . . that God remakes the world." To which Friel

Of the two theological subjects examined, the Bible and the gospel, the potential disunity resides with the latter. Yet this chapter, before seeking to clarify their potential gospel differences, will first critique their unified understanding of Scripture.

The Bible

Both McLaren and Pagitt claim to love, appreciate, respect, and hold the Scripture in high regard, as a "family story" and "living member" of the emergent community of faith.[3] At first reading, this might sound promising to homileticians who equally love, respect, and honor the Bible (Ps 119). Preachers who understand Scripture to be God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19–21); preachers who submit themselves to it as the final authority for faith and life; preachers who trust it to be the foundation of eternal truth for the church; preachers who believe they are called to herald its truths as the very Words of God (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 4:2); and preachers who believe it to be the divine means by which to know God—through its revealing of the person and finished salvific work of Jesus (Luke 24:27)—might just rejoice in hearing the emergent tribe raving about their excitement and fidelity over the Bible.

However, a more in-depth look into the meaning behind McLaren and Pagitt's emergent affection for the Bible, when compared to the description above, seems to reveal a polemical allegiance to Scripture—one that some preachers candidly reject.[4]

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responded, "Ok, Doug, hold on Doug . . . Doug hold on a second. I have no idea what you just said." The entire interview consisted of this type of confusing interaction. See Doug Pagitt, "An Interview with Doug Pagitt by Todd Friel," on *The Way of the Master Radio*, n.p. [cited 22 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://www.wayofthemasterradio .com/podcast/index.php?s=doug+Pagitt. For the transcript see Rob Willmann, "WOTM Radio Transcript: Todd Friel Interviews Doug Pagitt," *Willman's Blog*, n.p. [cited 10 July 2008]. Online: http://www.robwillman.com/blog/. For a critique of McLaren's use of Scripture, which gives evidence for his lack of perspicuity when handling the Bible, see John MacArthur, "Perspicuity of Scripture: The Emergent Approach," *TMSJ* 17/2 (Fall 2006): 141–58.

[3] Refer to the message section of chapters 4 and 5.

[4] E.g. MacArthur forthrightly rejects McLaren's position on Scripture. He claims McLaren undermines the clarity of Scripture in five ways: first, "by questioning whether biblical doctrine can be held with certainty"; second, by "needlessly introducing complexity into biblical interpretation"; third, by "questioning the possibility of deriving propositional truth from the Bible"; fourth, by his "refusal to abide by the Bible's emphasis on the exclusive nature of the Christian gospel"; and fifth and final, he undermines the perspicuity of Scripture by his "pointed criticism of conservative evangelicals who insist on the clarity of Scripture." See MacArthur, "Perspicuity of Scripture," 141ff. Cf. Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . A New Reformation or an End-Time Deception* (Silverton: Lighthouse Trails, 2007), 192–93, who refers to McLaren's handling of Scripture as "blasphemy!"

Gary Gilley's critique of insiders within the emerging church, which aptly applies to McLaren and Pagitt, catches this discrepancy when he writes that leaders of this movement "are fond of expressing their excitement and fidelity to the Word of God, even as they undermine it."[5] Evidence for double talk can be observed in both preachers view of Scripture, which presents a patronizing voice to the *sola scriptura* mantra of the Reformers, much less to Scripture's claim about itself, which is ultimately God's claim about Himself.[6] These two emerging preachers, in the name of a plethora of philosophical post-isms—post-modernism, post-foundationalism, post-colonialism, post-evangelicalism, post-conservatism, post-liberalism, and post-Protestantism, have in essence become post-biblicist,[7] not because of a lack of praise or use of Scripture, but by their rejection of it as the literal words of God.[8]

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[5] Gary Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home: A Faithful Church in Deceptive Times* (Webster: Evangelical, 2006), 162–63. Examples of McLaren's undermining of Scripture might include the following: his challenge to fundamentalist to reassess which elements (virgin birth, inerrancy, plenary inspiration of the Bible, penal substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection of Jesus, and imminent return of Jesus) are truly necessary for "vibrant Christian faith"; his belief that "doctrinal distinctives" are like cigarettes—"the use of which often leads to a hard-to-break Protestant habit that is hazardous to spiritual health (and that makes the breath smell bad)" (195); and his (and Pagitt's) view of biblical truth that argues for "new forms, new methods, new structures . . . new content, new ideas, new truths," and "new meaning" in order to address postmodern challenges (194). See Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 184–98. McLaren's view of biblical distinctives (unnecessary?) appears to differ with Scripture. The Bible is more than a handful of specific truths, but it is not unbiblical to hold fast, meditate, defend, teach, instruct, guard, refute and rejoice over identified distinctives or *things* (John 17:13) that God has revealed about Himself through special revelation (1 Tim 4:15, 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13–14, 4:2–4; Titus 1:9).

[6] McLaren's generous orthodoxy is ungenerous toward the *sola* Reformation mottoes: *sola Scriptura* and *sola fide*. He sees them as reducing truth to a few fundamentals, which for him is "questionable if not downright dangerous" (198). He does embrace the Reformers motto of *semper reformanda*, but with a postmodern twist (190). The Reformers called for reform in order to realign the church with the Word of God; the emergent's call for reform in order to align the church (and the Word) with changes in culture. See McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 184–98, and D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 42. Cf. Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 194. Horton warns that with the loss of *sola scriptura* comes the loss of its "corollaries: *solo Christo* (by Christ alone), *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (through faith alone), and *soli Deo Gloria* (to God alone be glory)."

[7] See Edward Farley, "Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching," in *Preaching as a Theological Task* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 174–75, for a description of a post-biblicist paradigm where "the tyranny of the passage over the sermon will give way to a multivalent use of Scripture." Carson describes the postmodern allegiance of Farley as being "dogmatic insistence that the authority of Scripture derives not from its content, but from its power to excite new occurrences of 'revelation'." See D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 242. This preaching paradigm that welcomes new meanings of the text fits well with McLaren and Pagitt's postmodern/communal approach to Scripture. See chapter 4, footnote 27.

[8] The Bible clearly bears witness to itself as the written Word of God. The Old Testament records over 3800 times the phrase, "the word of the Lord came" or its equivalents. See Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 31. Cf. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "A Theology of Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (ed. Michael Duduit; Nashville: Broadman, 1992),

Although McLaren claims that his "regard for Scripture is higher than ever," he, and Pagitt, have failed to regard God's Word in the same manner as Jesus.[9] Furthermore, instead of listening to the voices of the New Testament writers about Scripture, they seem to give preference to the voices of twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy—embracing their beliefs about the Bible as the hermeneutic and homiletical position for the postmodern/emerging era.[10]

Understanding the Bible in this light leads to the interpretation and proclamation of Scripture in ways contrary to its

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15. The Bible does not defend this point; rather it definitively declares it—Old and New Testament alike (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Pet 1:19–21). Put simply, God has spoken. Moreover, since He has spoken, "His Word is to be trusted and relied upon with all the faith that we would invest in God Himself," writes Mark Dever, in his defense of the role of the Word of God in preaching. Dever also raises a pertinent question about Scripture in relation to how man can actually know God. He writes, "How do we define who God is and what He calls us to do? We have basically two options for doing this: We could make it up; or our God could tell us." He opts for the latter, trusting in the Bible as God's means to tell us about Himself. See Dever, *Nine Marks*, 31. If the authors of Scripture believed in it as the literal Word of God (Gal 3:22; Rom 9:17), and if McLaren and Pagitt claim their love for this same Word, then why do they reject it as the literal Word of God?

[9] Brian McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word after That* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 111. Jesus held a high view of Scripture understanding it to be the Word of God and thus by nature authoritative, completely true and trustworthy—without error. Examples of this include His proclaiming Scripture as the truth of God against Satan's attacks (Matt 4:1–11), His declaration that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), His chastisement of the disciples failure to believe "all that the prophets had spoken" (Luke 24:25), and His divine affirmation of the complete fulfillment of all Scripture—even the smallest details (Matt 5:18). Jesus upheld the Old Testament as the authoritative literal Words of God and passed on His divine authority to His disciples in writing the New Testament (Luke 10:16). His promised divine presence (John 14:26) instructed the disciples, allowing the New Testament writers to understand their unique role in proclaiming and writing the Word of God (2 Cor 13:3; 1 Thess 2:13; Eph 2:20; 2 Pet 3:15-16). See James Emery White, "Inspiration and Authority of Scripture," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (ed. David Dockery, Kenneth Mathews, and Robert Sloan; Nashville: Broadman, 1994), 20–21. Cf. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 51, who provide fitting counsel to conclude this discussion. They write, "The preacher who is committed to the lordship of Christ surely must give careful attention to Jesus' view of Scripture."

[10] The basic tenet of neo-orthodoxy about Scripture (such as was held by Karl Barth and Emil Brunner) can be observed throughout the emergent writings of McLaren and Pagitt. Seemingly rejecting revelation (Scripture) as God's literal communication of information (propositional revelation) about Himself that can be trusted and understood as objective eternal truths, they lean hard toward the view of revelation as being the presence of God Himself "behind," "beyond," and/or "above" the text, which merely provides "hints" of God speaking. The result of denying propositional knowledge of God for personal understanding and relationship leads to, for McLaren and Pagitt, a rejection of an orthodox position of Scripture as authoritative, inerrant, and inspired as God's literal Word. See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 209–11, 217, 219, 254, 270, 278–79, 543, 555, 610, and 1181, for an historical overview of neo-orthodoxy.

The critique of the movement by DeYoung and Kluck has identified this same neo-orthodox thread woven throughout many emerging church writings. DeYoung writes, "In many ways, when it comes to their understanding of Scripture, emergent leaders are the new neoorthodoxy." See Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 74. Cf. Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 163. Gilley writes that McLaren's neo-orthodox view of Scripture reflects a belief that "the Bible becomes the 'word of God' but is not the completed Word of God, for God's Word can be found in anything he 'inspires.'"

very nature and purpose. Examining some of the neo-orthodox/emergent/re-visionist ways McLaren (the *philogian*) and Pagitt (the *contrarian*) interpret and teach Scripture warrants discussion that is more detailed; five examples will suffice.[11]

First, both men seem to claim an over-the-top understanding of Scripture as full-narrative. Applause for their desire to reclaim and proclaim this genre of Scripture is commendable.[12] It is after all the most copious genre of the Bible.[13] However, it is not the only genre or means of divine instruction. Carson, in his critique of the emerging church, writes, "The Bible includes a lot of things in addition to narrative, or things embedded in narrative, or sometimes things that embed narrative: law, lament, instruction, wisdom, ethical injunction, warning, apocalyptic, imagery, letters, promise, reports, propositions, ritual, and more."[14] Failure to properly handle these others modes of biblical revelation can lead to a distortion of Scripture and an emaciated congregation.[15]

Misrepresentation of Scripture can also occur as a result of ignoring the point of the narrative. Simply put, narratives have a point.[16] Besides the identifiable rhetorical form found in biblical

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[11] Richard Mayhue labels McLaren a "philogian" based on his writings like *A Generous Orthodoxy* that reveal more philosophy than theology. He writes, "He is a man promoting a church that is far more dependent on philosophy than Scripture; that is eclectic, ecumenical, and earthbound in its substance; a church that doubts biblical certainties and resists the authority of God as found in Scripture." It is hard to argue against Mayhue's critique when McLaren himself undercuts Scripture's divine authority thus placing the authority, theoretically above the text with God, but ultimately below the text with man—for which the apostle Paul warned "beware" (Col 2:8).

Mayhue's stern rebuke of McLaren's teachings also includes the label "litastor," which he defines as "a literary critic masquerading as a pastor." See Richard Mayhue, "The Emerging Church: Generous Orthodoxy or General Obfuscation?" *TMSJ* 17/2 (Fall 2006): 204–5.

[12] It is laudable when biblical narratives are interpreted and preached in a manner honorable to the driving intentions of the story's author, which ultimately is God. See Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-Create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 62–101, for a contemporary homiletical discussion on the importance of the narrative biblical genre.

[13] Arthurs estimates that narrative makes up 60 percent of the Bible. Ibid., 64.

[14] Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 164.

[15] Bryan Chapell warns, "A congregation fed only stories will be malnourished." In addition, when referring to Jesus' use of parables, he claims that He explained what he meant. Therefore, writes Chapell, preaching today should not lose site of the fact that "the Bible includes sufficient propositional content to explain what its stories mean." See Bryan Chapell, "Alternative Models," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (ed. Michael Duduit; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 125.

[16] The responsibility of homileticians is to discern this point through proper hermeneutical exegesis (grammatical, historical, theological investigation of the text) of the narrative and then proclaim its meaning (this requires more than relegating biblical fidelity to a simple narrative reading of Scripture). Walter Kaiser recommends "principlizing" the narrative passage in order to "bridge the 'then' of the text's narrative with the 'now' needs of our day." This approach, he argues, "refuses to settle for cheap and quick solutions which confuse our own personal point of view (good or bad) with

stories, there also resides a definable theological message.[17] John Sailhamer captures both when stating, "A text is . . . an embodiment of an author's intention, that is a strategy designed to carry out that intention."[18] Discerning the intention of the biblical narrative begins with a submission to God (propositionally and authoritatively revealed in Scripture) as sovereign and supreme over His revelation—speaking intentionally through His chosen authors (2 Pet 1:20–21).[19] To handle the biblical narrative (or any genre) without such a hermeneutical presupposition can sway (erroneously) how His story (Scripture) is interpreted.

Second, McLaren and Pagitt seem to prize the Bible more as mystery than knowable, propositional, eternal truths, about God and man.[20] If by mystery it means they are acknowledging the glory and ways of God that reigns supremely over mankind's finitude (Isa 55:8–9; Job 42:2–6), or reacting against the downsizing of God to a mere box of propositions, then fine.[21] But, as DeYoung's critique of the movement asserts, if mystery is somehow linked to an "implied doctrine of God's unknowability," and used as a way to jettison

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that of the inspired writer." See Walter Kaiser, *Toward An Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 198.

McLaren, Pagitt, and many emergents might disagree with such a proposal, yet, in actuality, it is not the "principlizing" they would reject—for they too ultimately preach with points and a purpose. Rather, the tension, might ultimately reside in submitting to the inspired writer who has a point that calls for a response of obedience—to do otherwise would mean to rebel. Such a rebellious spirit leads to what Kaiser might refer to as "subjectivistic exegesis" (198).

[17] Grant Osborne argues, "Biblical narrative is indeed theological at the core. . . . Narrative is not as direct as didactic, but it does have a theological point and expects the reader to interact with that message." See Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 172.

[18] John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 46– 47.

[19] Stephen and David Olford state that preachers "must believe" that the Bible has been "sovereignly preserved by God throughout the centuries . . . ." See Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 19.

[20] McLaren and Pagitt's neo-orthodox tendencies might explain one reason for their understanding of Scripture as mystery. Millard Erickson, writing on the tenets of neo-orthodoxy, states, "What God reveals is God, not information about God. And, as a result, the Bible is not revelation. Revelation is the personal presence of God. That cannot be captured in words and ideas and cannot be committed to paper." See Millard J. Erickson, "Revelation," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (ed. David Dockery, Kenneth Mathews, and Robert Sloan; Nashville: Broadman, 1994), 15. This believed inability to capture who God is in words, logically leads to a less favorable view about Scripture as propositional truth. However, Scripture does record that the understanding of propositional truths about God leads to great joy, celebration, and intimate relationship with Him (2 Kings 22–23; 2 Chr 15; Neh 8:8, 12; John 14:21).

[21] See John MacArthur, *The Truth War* (Nashville: Nelson, 2007), 15, where he argues that the reason postmoderns (and emergents who minister on their terms) are uncomfortable with propositions is because of their dislike of "clarity and inflexibility required to deal with truth in propositional form" (15). MacArthur also addresses the need for a "personal element to truth," while holding firm that "to reject the propositional content of the gospel is to forfeit saving faith, period."

taking responsibility for the clear truth claims of Scripture, then something has gone awry with how these preachers are interpreting, or to draw from emerging church vernacular, *dancing* with mystery.[22]

For example, Pagitt claims, "Mystery is not the enemy to be [conquered] nor a problem to be solved, but rather, the partner with whom we dance." He continues, "We are called to show each other the way into mystery."[23] This may sound postmodern and spiritual, but does it sound (or is it) biblical? The Apostle Paul, one who proclaimed the words of God (1 Cor 14:37; 1 Thess 2:13), called believers into a meaningful, joyful, hope-centered relationship with God; not by leading them into some vague spirituality or existential maze of mysticism,[24] but rather into the revelation, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the revealed mystery—the person and finished work of God in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:17–18; 3:1–12; Col 1:24–29).[25]

Paul's teachings did not focus on humanity coming into the way of mystery; Paul's teachings, according to David Wells, focused on humanity coming to the "knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim 2:25; cf. 3:7–8; 4:4).[26] Where did Paul receive such an idea as objective, rational truth, having not lived in the age of enlightenment or

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[22] DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 37–39. Carson rejects the argument about the inability to know truth by stating "that we can know some things of what Scripture says truly, even if nothing omnisciently." See Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 165.

[23] Doug Pagitt, as quoted in Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 85.

[24] Mystic worship practices (long associated with Eastern religions) are common within the emergent church. See Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 103–4, for a described Easter labyrinth experience where "walking . . . invites the body into a rhythm of moving around and moving toward the center, then back out." See Oakland, *Faith Undone*, 62–120, for a critique against the emerging church for its mystic orthopraxy. Cf. Al Mohler, "The Empty Promise of Meditation," *Albert Mohler Blog*, n.p. [cited 11 Nov. 2008]. Online: http://www.albertmohler.com/blog-read.php?id=2782.

[25] Paul did not perceive any dichotomy between truths about Jesus and the person of Jesus—the opposite is true. Jesus Himself tied relationship to obedience, which came as a result of obeying specific points/truths (commandments) revealed by Him (John 14:21). Ironically, the refusal to obey specific points/propositions/truths and/or commands, by choice or accident—having gotten lost in mystery, would lead to less relational intimacy with God, the very opposite of what emergent mystery claims to offer. Cf. Col 3:10, where Paul refers to specific acquired knowledge as the means of transformation into the image of Jesus Christ. Horton offers some thoughtful perspective. He writes, "The real power and wisdom is not found in principles for our victorious living but in the announcement of God's victory in Christ." See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 103. Biblical principles are not meant to be a means to an end, but rather to lead people to cherish Christ—man's wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). See Leonard Sweet, *Out of Questions into the Mystery: Getting Lost in the Godlife Relationship* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2004), for a look into what McLaren refers to as "relational theology" (back cover).

[26] David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmands, 2008), 79.

modernity? Paul claims to have received His directives from Jesus (Gal 1:12), the full embodiment of truth, who naturally taught truth and established His followers in truth (John 17:17). Jesus Himself even ties the believer's joy to the knowledge of truth, "*These things* I speak in the world, that they may have My *joy* fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13, emphasis added). McLaren and Pagitt, in contrast to Jesus, seem to relish tethering joy to mystery, not knowable truth.[27] Doctrine, dogma, and deliberate truths are out; mystery is in.[28] For both preachers to continue down this postmodern epistemological path, one that Wells claims cherishes a "studied uncertainty," it might imply (or expose?) that conversing about mystery, as a biblical trait to treasure, is nothing more than an emergent cloak to cover a denial of the knowable "knowledge of truth"—at least as revealed in Scripture and understood (down through the ages) as "God's perfect knowledge of himself and of all reality."[29] Mystery is a beautiful thing, but so is mystery revealed, "Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).

Third, a neo-orthodox view of Scripture combined with a postmodern interpretive mindset seems to welcome a hermeneutical trajectory that leads to culture influencing the church instead of the church influencing the culture. Gilley, in *This Little Church Stayed Home: A Faithful Church in Deceptive Times*, critiques what he considers to be deceptive practices in the church today labeling this emerging interpretive technique as "redemptive hermeneutics."[30] The redemptive hermeneutical approach is one

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[27] See chapter 4, footnote 29 and 59 for an example of McLaren's joy in the unknown. How does this mindset fair with the New Testament writers who claimed, "We know. . . . We know. . . . We know" (1 John 5:18–20)? This knowledge of truth, which can be known and was declared so that others "may know" (1 John 5:13), is also tied to joy by being wed to the person and finished work of Jesus (1 John 1:1– 4). See David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 79, for a discussion on the clarity of the disciple's speech.

[28] It does not "make complete sense" and "it stopped working for me as I grew older," declares one of McLaren's postmodern fictional characters about Christian dogma and doctrine. See Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 102. Wells labels emergents as "doctrinal minimalists." He refers to them as "ecclesiastical free spirits" with a small "doctrinal center." Furthermore, "By their very posture they are resistant to doctrinal structure that would contain and restrict them." See Wells, *The Courage To Be Protestant*, 17.

[29] David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 77. A central tenet of Horton's *Christless Christianity* is that the church is void of knowledge—"particularly, as Paul himself specifies, the knowledge of God's justification of the wicked by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works (Rom. 10:2, see vv. 1–15)." See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 21. This central concern of Horton's is clearly not the central concern of emergents.

[30] Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 166–67. Gilley identifies two other hermeneutical weaknesses ("hermeneutic of suspicion" and "rhetorical hermeneutic") of emergent practices. The former renders Scripture impotent since no one is capable of infallible interpretations.

that bypasses the literal interpretation of Scripture for a more spiritual reading that accommodates the shifting beliefs of culture.[31] Whether or not McLaren or Pagitt uses this particular term is uncertain, but evidence for its practice among them is clear.

McLaren and Pagitt's position about homosexuality presents a definitive case in point. Pagitt argues for "new conclusions about sexuality" and encourages the church to consider "news ways of being sexual" in order to stay in touch with the emerging culture.[32] McLaren opts for a different approach. He chooses silence on the matter by calling for "a five year moratorium on making pronouncements."[33] In doing so, he incorporates another trendy hermeneutical ploy, the hermeneutic of humility or suspicion, which seems to confuse biblical humility with that of uncertainty.[34] In

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[31] Ibid., 166.

[32] Doug Pagitt, "The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 140.

[33] Brian McLaren, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question," *Out of Ur*, *Leadership Journal Blog,* n.p. [cited 23 Jan. 2006]. Online: http://blog.christianitytoday .com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o.html.

[34] The hermeneutic of humility, where it seems theologically fashionable to claim uncertainty on a given subject, even subjects where Scripture speaks intelligibly and clear, as in the case of homosexuality, has become a worthy pastoral option within the emergent camp. See MacArthur, *Truth War*, 155–56, for a description and rebuke of a "hermeneutic of humility," which he deems as a "blasphemous form of arrogance . . . ." Who after all, McLaren and Pagitt might claim, can be inerrant in their interpretation of Scripture? Who, in this instance, can know the answer to such a complex and multi-layered issue? E.g., McLaren writes, "I am no doubt wrong on many things. I am likely wrong in my personal opinions on homosexuality (which, by the way, were never expressed in the piece, contrary to the assumptions of many responders)." See Brian McLaren, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question 4: McLaren's Response," *Out of Ur,* n.p. [cited 30 Jan. 2006]. Online: http://blog.christianitytoday .com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_Mclaren_o_3.html. The fact that he states he never expressed his own views on the subject provides evidence for his lack of clarity or biblical/pastoral stand on truth. This position seems to differ with biblical instruction such as given in 1 Peter 3:15?

This type of disclaimer, which is common within the emergent camp, seems too convenient. Mark Driscoll raised the question as to whether or not McLaren could have actually not yet reached a definitive position on the subject after twenty-four years in the pastorate. Cf. Mark Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture," *SEBTS*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct, 2007). Online: http://www.sebts.edu/Convergent/GeneralInfo/. Scripture is clear on God's design for sexual relations—the trajectory since the garden has not changed (Gen 19; Lev 18:22; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9–11; cf. Gal 5:19–21; Eph 5:3–5; 1 Tim 1:9–10; Jude 7). This is not to imply that homileticians are infallible in their interpretations. Yet God has spoken with clarity so that His people, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit (illumination) can hear and understand His voice (John 10:27; 16:13). If not, why the commands to rightly interpret and proclaim His Word (2 Tim 2:15, 4:2)? God's truth can be known. Gilley rightly states, "While we will agree that infallible and inerrant interpreters are non-existent, it does not follow that the Bible cannot be understood, rather the vast majority of the Scriptures are clear and comprehensible." See Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 165–66.

Therefore, when the Bible is clear on a given subject, it is dishonoring to His Word and the call of the pastorate to choose silence or deconstruct/reconstruct the message. McLaren and Pagitt, by a redemptive, postmodern, and/or humble subjectivistic hermeneutic have done just that. Why? If they have a high regard for Scripture, love Jesus, and love people, desiring God's best for them, why then is a straight forward interpretation and application on homosexuality such a

either case, both men have voted, Pagitt by proclamation and McLaren by silence, for the trajectory of the emerging culture on human sexuality to trump the clear, intelligible, and unchanged message of Scripture.[35] Therefore, the evidence bends toward their allowing *sola cultura*
to set their hermeneutical agenda rather than *sola scriptura*.[36]

Fourth, denouncing the Bible as the church's foundation for truth, the final authority for faith, and yes, even as a how-to-manual for life does nothing but undermine the Scriptures they claim to appreciate. The Bible, simply understood, is the foundation for the church. The clear implication of Paul's words to the church in Ephesus, which states, "The household of God [is] built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets," did not mean he considered himself, other apostles, or the prophets as the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20). Rather his words spoke to the foundation of the church being the Scriptures, the very words of

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challenge? Why is proclaiming this truth such a burdensome and ambiguous task? Is there no fear before God of leading people away from truth (Ezek 34; Eccl 12:13–14; Ps 19:9, 11)? Maybe Carson has the best final word, "At some juncture churches [and their pastors] have to decide whether they will, by God's grace, try to live in submission to Scripture, or try to domesticate Scripture" (172). See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 172. McLaren and Pagitt seem to be choosing the latter.

[35] A link between the new hermeneutic and the interpretive mindset of both McLaren and Pagitt exist, if not by intent, at least by practice. Distanciation presents one benefit derived from this new position that is helpful in the interpretive process—no interpreter is infallible. However, this is where a hermeneutical corrective might apply to these two emerging preachers. Carson, writing on exegetical fallacies, states that this new mindset might "harm us if it serves as a ground for the relativizing all opinion about what Scripture is saying." He continues, "I do not know what biblical authority means, nor even what submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ means, if we are unprepared to bend our opinions, values, and mental structures to what the Bible says, to what Jesus teaches." It appears that this is a case of distanciation gone amuck or replaced with what this author refers to as *cultural embraciation*—an inappropriate alignment with, or appeasement to, cultural norms in place of biblical truth. See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 127–28. For McLaren and Pagitt, culture seems to be setting the norm instead of Scripture—*norma ormans non normata*, "'the norm of norms which cannot be normed.'" Reformer quote taken from R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 28–29. Cf. Michael E. Wittmer, *Don't Stop Believing: Why Living Like Jesus Is Not Enough* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 73–83.

[36] Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 227. Pagitt and Jones's belief that "we ought to have a new theology for a new world" would appear to support this conclusion. See Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, "A New Theology for a New World," n.p. (lecture presented at the National Pastors Conference, San Diego, CA, 2006). Online: http://www.psitapes.com.

Roger Oakland refers to Pagitt's belief system as representing "contextual theology." Contextual theology, he writes, does not "use the Bible as a means of theology or measuring rod of truth and standards by which to live; and rather than have the Bible mold the Christian's life, let the Christian's life mold the Bible." Thus, Pagitt's contextual interpretive lens, results in "leading followers in the opposite direction" of Rom 12:2 by "teaching that the Word of God needs to be conformed to people and cultures instead of allowing it to conform lives through Jesus Christ." See Oakland, *Faith Undone*, 42, 51–52. Carson states of McLaren on this subject that he "has given us very little evidence that he is fairly described as a 'biblical' Christian." See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 172.

God—received and written by divine inspiration, proclaimed with authority, and welcomed as "truth, the word of God" (1 Thess 2:13).[37] If the early church accepted the teachings of the apostles as the foundation and means to live in accordance with God's will (Acts 2:41–42; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6, 1 Tim 3:14–15; Jude 3), why then do McLaren and Pagitt so easily dismiss the Scriptures as being the solid foundation for belief and practice?[38] As followers of the way of Jesus, should they not reevaluate their position—maybe by considering the significance placed upon the Scriptures by Jesus Himself (Matt 5:17–18; Luke 24:25–27), the Word of God incarnate and the ultimate foundation (John 1:1; 1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20)?[39]

The Bible, simply understood, is the final authority for faith and practice (1 Tim 3:16–17). Faith to proclaim the Scriptures from this doctrinal stance leans heavily upon the preacher's view of inspiration.[40] McLaren and Pagitt, having forfeited the orthodox position of inspiration, surrender the intrinsic inerrant authority in the text to that of the community of faith and/or a postmodern/neo-orthodox view of God as being behind, beyond, or above the text (implying that the Bible in and of itself is not the Word of God).[41] Therefore, God's Word is rejected as immutable

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[37] This argument contends with McLaren's claim that the Bible never refers to itself as the foundation. Simply because the word itself is not used does not negate this meaning for Eph 2:20. This is exactly what Paul meant. Cf. DeYoung, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 81–82.

[38] See R. Scott Smith, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 110–40, for a critique of McLaren's view on foundationalism and certainty. DeYoung remarks that "for every fundamentalist who loves the Bible more than Christ, I'm willing to bet there are several emergent Christians who honor the Bible less than Christ did." See DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 81.

[39] See Mike Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2008), 34–49, for a convincing discussion on Jesus' high view of Scripture.

[40] Authority is also implicitly linked to inerrancy. James White, speaking to the Scriptures self-witness, states, "As all of Scripture is a communication from God, all of Scripture is absolute truth. To hold to Scripture's inspiration implicitly demands an allegiance to biblical inerrancy. As the very breath of God, Scriptures must be fully truthful." White supports his position by spotlighting the "interchangeability in the phrases 'God says' and 'Scripture says' (cf. Gal 3:8; Rom 9:17; Matt 19:4–5; Heb 3:7; Acts 4:24–25)" concluding that "where Scripture speaks, God speaks. God cannot lie (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18)." See White, "Inspiration and Authority of Scripture," 25.

If the Bible is ultimately rejected for what it self-discloses about itself—by its very nature, verbal plenary inspiration and inerrancy, —then what follows is naturally a rejection of absolute authority. See Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 49–56.

[41] Richard Holland's assessment of Pagitt's progressional preaching highlights this relegating of scriptural authority to the community. While Pagitt gives sparing credence to the authority of Scripture by making it "an authoritative member" of their community, Holland pinpoints the problem by identifying Pagitt's refusal to make the Bible "*the* authoritative member." As a result, Scripture is rejected as the divine words of God ruling over the church; rather Scripture is "demoted to community member" and "the pews become the pulpits as the Bible is escorted to take a seat in the pew." See Richard Holland, "Progressional Dialogue & Preaching: Are They the Same?" *TMSJ* 17/2 (Fall 2006): 215.

and thus authoritative. This results in a fluid or elastic interpretation of Scripture where continual change, based on changes in context and culture, is the norm.[42]

Community-contextual-cultural-change agents of the Scripture and its message might be the appropriate nomenclature for this view held by McLaren and Pagitt. However, does it represent the view held by the prophets, Christ, the apostles, early church Fathers, the Reformers, and/or the pre-modern era?[43] According to Scripture, Mark Dever is right when he states that God "speaks or we are forever lost in the darkness of our own speculation."[44] Since God has spoken and "handed down" His Word for all generations, preachers need not speculate, re-imagine, re-define, or reconstruct anything about Scripture or its central message for faith or practice (Jude 3).[45] Preachers are not given the assignment to change the Word or craft the message to appease culture, but rather to receive the Word—"the Lord said," "the Lord spoke," "the word of the Lord came"—and then preach it (2 Tim 4:2). The authority resides in the Word received as being the very Word of God (2 Pet 1:20–21); the authority in preaching resides in proclaiming accurately that which has already been given (2 Tim 2:15; 4:2). Despite McLaren and Pagitt's postmodern denial of authority in the text, which can lead to a perceived absence, complete confusion, or outright denial of truth in God's Word, authority does reside in the text and thus truth and authority for orthodoxy and praxis resides there as well. If it does not, then why uphold and teach from a book that records such claims by its author(s)? Granted this might sound like an all or nothing fallacy, but the Bible either is or is not the authoritative, inspired, inerrant,

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[42] See chapter 4, footnote 27. Wells chastises emergents for making "the authority of Scripture uncertain and elastic in order to blend in more fully with postmodern ways of thinking." The result, he laments, is a loss of "understanding that the truth of God, in the hands of God, is sufficient for the life of the church in this world." See Wells, *The Courage To Be Protestant*, 227.

[43] See White, "Inspiration and Authority of Scripture," 25–26, for a review of what the history of the Christian church has believed about inerrancy. White remarks, "There is little doubt the Christian church historically has affirmed the idea of inerrancy" (25). Cf. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 251–52. Erickson echoes the same remarks as White while adding that it has not been until modern times that a "fully enunciated theory" has been established (251). Michael Horton asks, "Is there no catholicity?" in responding to McLaren's support of an ever changing message. See Michael Horton, quoted in McLaren, "The Method, the Message, and the Ongoing Story," 210.

[44] Dever, *Nine Marks*, 35.

[45] Mohler writes, "Preaching is not the business of speculating about God's nature, will or ways, but is bearing witness to what God has spoken concerning Himself. Preaching does not consist of speculation but exposition. See Mohler, "A Theology of Preaching," 14.

literal Word of God. By faith, preachers are called to receive it and proclaim it as such (Jonah 3:1–2).

If McLaren and Pagitt choose to deny this vintage truth about Scripture, then it is likely that "thus says the Lord" may shift to "thus says the people" or "It is written" will turn into "I/we have written."[46] When the more radical forms of reader-response theory, which cuts the text from its author, is employed, denying the original author any say or authority over that which he has written, then authority gets passed to the community of readers where everyone simply has the freedom to espouse their own agenda.[47] If the text is not guarded, the deconstructionist voices of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, and Stanley Fish may be heard trumpeting over the voices of Paul, Peter, John, and even Jesus in the hermeneutical and homiletical practices of emergent leaders (Matt 5:18; John 20:21; 2 Tim 3:10–4:5; 2 Pet 1:20–21).[48]

Instead of the community locating themselves in the story of God, as Pagitt desires, they may find themselves becoming or writing the story for God.[49] This Lindbeckian break from the locus of authority (and truth) residing in the biblical text to residing in the community[50] (when combined with a communal approach to the sermon), could become hazardous to the sermonic event. Walter Kaiser provides such a warning, "Rather than Scripture declaring what God wants to say to us, the crowds that come dictate what is

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[46] Jesus is recorded as saying, "It is written" twenty times in the Gospels. The term, notes Abendroth, is a perfect passive, which means "Jesus is saying that the Old Testament was written and it forever stands written." This leaves no room for changes or adaptations to God's word and "denies the neo-orthodox Barthians breathing room." See Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers*, 38.

[47] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 28.

[48] Ibid., 20–25. Pagitt, in *contrarian* style, seems to almost rebuke Jesus' use of OT Scripture stating that His use of it was a "stretch sometimes." Doug Pagitt, *A Christianity Worth Believing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 59.

[49] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 38. Bryan Chapell ties this danger to a logical attribute of narrative preaching when it is viewed as "the master metaphor of expression based on the presumption that propositions cannot communicate." "When this happens," he writes, "personal experience becomes the master interpreter and ultimately, the ruler of understanding," which also means, "There is no meta-narrative to establish a transcendent truth, only multiple story lines." See Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (2d ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 189, 183, respectively. Pagitt incorporates elements of narrative methodology as will be discussed later in this chapter. Horton raises the question as to whether or not "we are preaching the Word from Genesis to Revelation as a testimony to Christ or as a resource for writing our own story," in his critique of contemporary Christianity as observed within the emergent camp. See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 144.

[50] Wells argues that the postliberal George Lindbeck "wrested the interpretation of Scripture from the individual and placed it in the hands of the community"—a practiced conviction of emergents. See Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 17.

acceptable, popular, nonthreatening, and preachable. . . ."[51] Based on the deviations from orthodox beliefs about Scripture's inspiration, authority, inerrancy, sufficiency, and the resultant liberal theological stands held by these emergent preachers, it would be inconsistent to argue or deny that this warning has not already emerged within their ministries and within much of the emergent tribe.

Lastly, in relation to this fourth concern, what is so wrong with understanding the Bible as a how-to-manual for life? Is it more than this? Certainly it is. However, it is also not less than this (Ps 119:105). The Bible is God's very own words given for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction—so that man might be complete and prepared for good works by knowing what to believe and *how to* live life pleasing to God (2 Tim 3:16–17).[52] Simply understood, the Bible is a how-to manual for life.[53] Martin Luther might provide some worthy insight now. He did not devise petty arguments against God's Word as an answer book for life. He rather embraced it as an all-sufficient book for life. He wrote, "I am content with the gift of the Scriptures, which teaches and supplies all that is necessary, both for this life and that which is to come."[54] Moreover, if Timothy received the Scripture from the apostle Paul as the foundation (1 Tim 3:14–15), authority (2 Tim 16–17), and how-to book (2 Tim 2:22–24) for life for the early church culture,

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[51] Walter Kaiser, "The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today," *Preaching* 11 (1995): 6.

[52] See John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), for fifty demands about how-to live life in the way of Jesus. Not only did Jesus provide instruction on how-to live, as recorded in the New Testament, but so did the Old Testament Scriptures. God seemed adamant about Joshua living by the book if wanted any part of living a success-filled life (Josh 1:7–8).

[53] The Bible is *the* source for knowing *how-to* live a life pleasing to God. Is utilizing it for this purpose somehow contradictory to being a postmodern/emergent follower of Jesus? How else would a follower of Jesus know *how-to* live life in a manner pleasing to Jesus if He did not provide instructions on how to do so? Turning genuine followers of Jesus away from understanding the Bible as an answer book for life will only encourage them to turn to other sources for life's answers. How would that help believers become genuine, authentic, transformed disciples of the way of Jesus?

DeYoung provides a pointed warning highlighting what a diminished view of Scripture might mean for future generations. He writes, "Burned-out evangelicals who go emergent and talk squishy about the Bible may still basically treat the Bible as if it were completely true and authoritative. This would be fortuitous inconsistency. But what happens in the second generation? What happens when an erstwhile church planter with a few Neo books under his belt starts doing church with a radical skepticism about the authority of the Bible and forms a people by musing on about how his community affirms the Bible (in part?), therefore making it 'welcome' in their conversation? We can wax eloquent about the beauty of the story and how the Scriptures read us, but unless people are convinced that the Bible is authoritative, true, inspired, and the very words of God, over time they will *read it less frequently, know it less fully, and trust in less surely*" (emphasis added). DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 78.

[54] Martin Luther, as quoted from Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers*, 47–48.

why cannot McLaren and Pagitt receive it as such for a post-modern one?[55] Is not God's Word the same yesterday, today, and forever (Mal 3:6a)? Better still, if the Scripture was sufficient for Jesus (Matt 4:4), can it not be sufficient for those who claim an all out allegiance as followers of His way?[56]

Fifth and final, and probably the most critical Bible observation, McLaren and Pagitt teach an *eisegetical*, misguided hermeneutical view of Scripture by making its primary emphasis a philosophical, revolutionary, social calling to live life in the way of Jesus—as defined by their kingdom of God, hope-filled Christianity message.[57] This all-inclusive, universalistic, liberating, emergent meta-narrative seems to over-shadow or potentially replace the orthodox, historical redemptive gospel meta-narrative. The biblical gospel meta-narrative emphasizes the need for reconciling with God through repentance of sin and placement of faith in the person and finished work of Jesus for eternal salvation. This leads to a joy-filled life of following in His ways that indubitably includes a social agenda for the church, but not at the expense of the orthodox, salvific message.

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[55] If by their angst against Scripture as an answer book for life they are responding to the seeker-sensitive "feed me five points so I can better my life" anthropocentric mentality, or reacting against errant proof-texting, then point taken. Ultimately the aim of acquiring any *how-to* biblical instruction for life can never be disconnected from giving glory to God the Father, which comes by connecting any biblical guidance to the person and finished work of Jesus (Phil 2:9–11). It is only through the means of God's grace that we can live a life pleasing to Him (Eph 2:8–10). Desiring to know *how-to* live life in accordance with His will is the responsibility of each Christian, which will at times require making decisions diametrically opposed to culture (Rom 12:1–2). Christians who live by the Scripture have a choice—bend their thoughts to the text, or bend the text to fit their thoughts. McLaren and Pagitt often choose the latter and in doing so they ultimately expose their hermeneutical allegiance to culture, not Christ. Therefore, rejecting the Bible as an answer book for life seems to be an unfortunate and unbiblical means to a postmodern end.

[56] Horton argues definitively that the Bible is "not an instruction manual for daily living" (148). His concern is that believers "miss the point that Christ is the sum and substance of its message" (142). The aim above is not to trivialize the Bible by emphasizing it as "life's instruction manual" as Horton warns. Rather it is to cherish and submit to it as it reveals "God's moral will for our lives" (148). Living by His will, ultimately leads to more of Him (John 14:21). See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 142–52.

[57] McLaren's latest books, *The Secret Message of Jesus* and *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crisis, and a Revolution of Hope,* along with Pagitt's latest writing, *A Christianity Worth Believing*, presents their most mature expressions of this position. See Scot McKnight, "McLaren Emerging," *Christianity Today* 9 (September 2008): 58–67, for an insightful review of McLaren's two works listed above. In this article McKnight presents a congenial review of McLaren's present emerging state while raising four concerns or questions: the need for greater clarity in expressing his position, confusion about the role of the cross in the emergent kingdom vision, limited ecclesiological discussion—what is the role of the church for this kingdom vision, and a hopeful convergence of Christians wrestling with the meaning of the gospel.

McLaren, Pagitt, and many of the emergent cohorts have in essence made orthopraxy the equivalence of orthodoxy.[58] DeYoung has cogently pinpointed this emergent position in stating, "Being a Christian . . . for McLaren [and Pagitt] . . . is less about faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ as the only access to God the Father and the only atonement for sins before a wrathful God, and more about living the life that Jesus lived and walking in His way."[59] In essence, the social journey in the way of Jesus is life; not Jesus is the way and life (John 6:53–58; 11:25–26; 14:6; 17:3; 20:31).

How did Jesus live His life and what is His way? McLaren and Pagitt's assessment to these questions align essentially with the social gospel, liberation theology, or postmodern multiperspectivalism.[60] Ridding the world of poverty, injustice, and war, and building communities of peace, as a way of life, is commendable. This mission does have a foothold in Scripture when seen through a proper understanding of soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology and biblical theology.[61] Yet, it does not describe nor identify the priority mission of Jesus. McLaren and Pagitt would undoubtedly reject Gilley's perspective on this topic, but his voice may certainly provide some needed balance:

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[58] A connection with Liberation theology is seen within the social aspects of McLaren and Pagitt's interpretation of Scripture. Donald Macleod's words about the implications of Liberation theology, in Christology, ring true of these two emergents. Macleod writes of this belief that holds "we know him only as we follow him, particularly as we involve ourselves in implementing his programme. From this standpoint, *orthopraxis* is more important than *orthodoxy*." See Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 253.

[59] DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent?*" 120.

[60] See Horton's response to McLaren in McLaren, "The Method, the Message, and the Ongoing Story," 213.

[61] Christian missions should involve engaging in world affairs for the welfare of others, but it looses its eternal value when divorced from the centrality of the gospel and Christ. Paul risked his life for the sake of the gospel (Acts 15:25–26), while simultaneously caring for the poor (Gal 2:10). Cf. Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 81–82. If the centrality of Christ, the cross, and the gospel can remain married to missions, or kept in the definition or act of being missional, then the emergent tribe does, at times, raise worthwhile questions and challenges to the church. "Rather than measuring the church by its attendance, we will measure it by its deployment," writes McLaren, which presents one good case in point. Although the rest of his critique might be a little over-the-top, it still warrants consideration: "One of the greatest enemies of evangelism is the church as fortress or social club; it sucks Christians out of their neighborhoods, clubs, workplaces, schools, and other social networks and isolates them in religious ghetto. . . . The Christians are warehoused as merchandise for heaven, kept safe in a protected space to prevent spillage, leakage, damage, or loss until their delivery." Unfortunately, this may be true for some evangelicals; however, this could also be said of some emergents when they refuse to incorporate a bold message of the cross, the blood, and sin when being missional in a postmodern/emerging culture. See Brian McLaren quoted in "Emergent Evangelism," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 26 Sept. 2008]. Online: http://www.ctlibrary.com/print.html?id=11412.

> Did Jesus show compassion and minister to the poor? Certainly, but did Jesus, or the apostles after him, fight for social justice on behalf of the poor and needy? Not at all. While Jesus, through the transformation of lives, began a process that would revolutionize much of the world in regard to injustice, he never made these things a central platform of his ministry nor that of the church. Jesus said virtually nothing about the environment, political tyranny, eradication of poverty and illiteracy, elimination of deadly disease or other social ills. This does not mean that these things are not important, but they are obviously not the heart of His ministry which was to save us from our sins and enable us "to become the righteousness of God in Christ" (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus could have started a social revolution without going to the cross, but without the cross we could not be redeemed from sin. Our mission is to call people 'out of darkness into His marvelous light' (1 Pet 2:9).[62]

Gilley's concern is not that emergent leaders are "wrong to be concerned about the environment and social injustice" but rather that "they are wrong to confuse it with the gospel of Jesus Christ."[63]

So what happens when this vision for utopia on earth becomes the interpretive lens by which to see all of Scripture? In the case of McLaren and Pagitt, the biblical message has become altered and the one-of-a-kind exclusive saving message of Jesus Christ has been either relegated to the emergent theological cellar or disposed of all together—leaving nothing *unique* to offer the world.[64]

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[62] See Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 161–62. See also Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 109–14. Horton writes that "when even good, holy, and proper things become confused with the gospel, it is only a matter of time before we end up with Christless Christianity: a story about us instead of a story about the Triune God that sweeps us into the unfolding drama" (109). His central critique of emergents is their confusing the law and the gospel—confusion he argues McLaren shares with Joel Osteen. He states, "Whether we define the *gospel* as God's invitation to everyone 'to turn from his or her current path and follow a new way' (with McLaren) or as 'becoming a better you' (with Osteen), we are confusing law and the gospel" (114).

[63] Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 159.

[64] Horton expresses his concern by writing, "Lost in this view is the uniqueness of Christ's once-and-for-all work for us, apart from us, outside of us, in the past, and the work that only he can do when he returns in glory." He concludes that the emergent view reflects a belief that "Jesus and the community, his work and ours, *blend into* one saving event" (emphasis added). See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 113-14.

The *journey* of Jesus is not the central message of the Bible; *Jesus* is the central message of the Bible (Luke 24:27; 2 Cor 4:5; Col 1:18, 27–29). Jesus is not just a way to follow, a way of truth, or a way of life; Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).[65] Jesus does not just offer a word of insight; Jesus is the Word, God incarnate (John 1:1, 14). Therefore, the only way to truly honor the Word of God is to first come under submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the redemptive lens by which to interpret all of Scripture and to borrow a phrase from Al Mohler, He is the "Metanarrative of all metanarratives"![66] To approach the Bible from any other vantage point is risky. Examining just how risky McLaren and Pagitt's gospel has become will now be the next subject for critique.

The Gospel

If McLaren has abandoned the gospel, then Pagitt has anathematized it.[67] This should come as no surprise having just

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Leonard Sweet, a popular go to theologian during the earlier days of the emerging church, provides a fairly scathing review of what the movement, at least the emergent camp, has become. In an email correspondence to Ed Stetzer he states, "The emerging church has become another form of social gospel. And the problem with every social gospel is that it becomes all social and no gospel. All social justice and no social gospel. It is embarrassing that evangelicals have discovered and embraced liberation theology after it destroyed the main line, old line, side line, off line, flat line church." See Ed Stetzer, "The Emergent/Emerging Church: A Missiological Perspective," *JBTM* 5/2 (2008), 71.

[65] Wells argues, "Christianity, in short, is from first to last all about truth! It is about he who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life." See Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant*, 76.

[66] Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 118.

[67] Evidence behind such a definitive statement runs throughout their respective chapters (four and five). D. A Carson states, in his critique of McLaren and Steve Chalke's view of the gospel, "I have to say, as kindly but as forceful as I can, that to my mind, if words mean anything, both McLaren and Chalke have largely *abandoned* the gospel (emphasis added)." See Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 186.

A candid example of Pagitt's rejection of an orthodox view of the gospel comes by way of an e-mail correspondence he had with a blogger. This blogger questioned Pagitt's view of gospel truth in relation to the need for a spiritual new birth, due to the sin of man, such as spoken of in Jeremiah 17:9—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Pagitt responded by directing this writer to *A Christianity Worth Believing* which he believes offers a "full understanding of the gospel." He then pitted his view of the good news against "the one perverted by the likes of John MacArthur." Pagitt goes on to say, "I do not say 'perverted lightly,' either. I really think what he communicates is so distant from the message of the Bible that it is dangerously harmful to people." Not all evangelicals would agree in full with McArthur's theological positions. However, would it be a stretch to conclude that MacArthur preaches anything but a dogmatic, doctrinally sound, orthodox, traditional, biblical view of the gospel truth (see John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Is Authentic Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008)? Therefore, for Pagitt to claim that his gospel is in complete contrast to MacArthur's presents a serious Galatians 1:8–9 dilemma. See Doug Pagitt quoted by Phil Johnson, "Different Gospels," *PyroManiacs*, n.p. [cited 2 Feb. 2008]. Online: http://www.teampyro.blogspot.com/2007/09/different-gospels.html.

reviewed their impeachment of the Bible as the literal, authoritative words of God. When the Scripture is not upheld, as "once for all delivered to the saints," then the message will change; McLaren and Pagitt provide no exception (Jude 3).[68]

McLaren presents his change to the gospel with a gentler tone, smoother verbiage, and a bit more ambiguity than Pagitt. It is smooth in that he occasionally makes mention or implies the importance of the orthodox view of the gospel while courting its antithesis. It is ambiguous in that it is hard to determine, based on his generosity with and endorsement of such an inclusive religious range of theological positions, if he has completely deserted all traditional tenets relating to the historical redemptive message of the gospel.[69]

However, in spite of the vacillating message, abandoned still best describes what he has done with, to borrow a coined phrase from Schaeffer, the "true truth" of the gospel.[70] How could it be

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[68] Openness to changing the gospel message has been an undercurrent or emerging reality of the emergent movement since its inception—simply more candor about unorthodox convictions have taken time to emerge. Brett Kunkle highlights this fact in his critique of the movement. His evidence comes from a 2004 emergent convention workshop where Pagitt co-led the theological discussion with Tony Jones revealing early signs of opening the door to an unorthodox gospel. In this 2004 workshop, Jones commented, "We do not think this [emerging church] is about changing your worship service. We do not think this is about . . . how you structure your church staff. This is actually about changing theology. This is about our belief that theology changes. The message of the gospel changes. It's not just the method that changes." At the 2005 emergent convention Pagitt taught this workshop alone and provided the same message, which focused on "re-imagining" and "reconstructing" theology because "we have a changing story" and "God's story is changing," thus "theology is inherently temporary" it is "our current best guess." When Kunkle asked Pagitt whether "we would need to reconstruct our view of Jesus and God," in light of Pagitt's changing message, he responded, "Yeah, probably. Could be. I'm hoping it doesn't come to that. It's dangerous." See Brett Kunkle, "Essential Concerns Regarding the Emerging Church," *The Resurgence Web Site*, n.p. [cited 2 May 2008]. Online: http//www.theresurgence.com.

At the 2006 *National Pastors Conference* held in San Diego, CA, Pagitt (now three years in a row) argued for this same position referring to his work as more apostolic than pastoral—meaning his calling is more focused on expressing the gospel to new environments with new theology for our times that's "deep, creative, and imaginative." It is not just new methods; it is "not the same story," he argued, "but a new and fresh gospel." See Pagitt and Jones, "A New Theology for a New World."

[69] McLaren's work, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, presents one case in point where he seems to embrace every theological position under the sun. Tim Challies' review of this work concluded with the following comments, "In the end I have to reject this book as being something entirely different than Christian. It portrays some sort of faith modeled loosely on aspects of Christianity, but there are far more error than truth." See Tim Challies, "Book Review- A Generous Orthodoxy," *Challies Web Site*, n.p. [cited 14 April 2008]. Online: http://www.challies.com/archives/book-reviews/book-review-a-g.php. Cf. Al Mohler, "'A Generous Orthodoxy'—Is It Orthodox?" Albert Mohler Blog, n.p. [cited 5 Sept. 2007]. Online: http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_print.php?cdate=2005-02-16.

[70] Francis Schaeffer, "Escape from Reason," in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian World View* (vol. 1 of *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture;* Westchester: Crossway, 1982), 218–19. In Scot McKnight's assessment of McLaren's gospel, he writes, "[McLaren] had to betray the Jesus and the gospel and the church that nurtured him to become faithful to the Jesus of this kingdom

described otherwise? McLaren joins ranks with other emerging writers to offer pejorative commentary concerning Christ's atoning sacrifice for the sins of man—as a form of "divine child abuse";[71] reconstructs and reduces the redemptive message of the cross to a mere stand or picture against violent force;[72] points the church toward purging the doctrine of original sin;[73] redefines the gospel and eternal life as the kingdom of God fixated on an earthly vision;[74] despises the value of doctrine as a means to personal relationship with God; diminishes propositional Christological claims about the person of Jesus to mere dialogue about how to live

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vision." See McKnight, "McLaren Emerging," 61. The gospel McLaren has betrayed is the orthodox understanding of the good news. See Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Nelson, 2007), 77–86, for a comparison of his emerging gospel to the conventional (orthodox) gospel. In his summary of the conventional gospel, he writes, "I believe we need to face the real possibility that the conventional view has in many ways been domesticated, watered down, and co-opted by the dominant framing story of our modern Western culture and, as a result, has become 'a gospel about Jesus' but not 'the gospel of Jesus'" (83). In other words, orthodoxy does not have the story (good news) right.

[71] McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 102. McLaren endorses Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). In this book the authors speak of the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement as a "form of cosmic child abuse" (182). Whittmer argues that this verbiage for the rejection of penal substitution originated with feminist and liberation theologians. See Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 89. McLaren also recommends Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2000). This work makes the following caricature statement about penal substitution: "God takes on the role of the sadist inflicting punishment, while Jesus, in his role as masochist, readily embraces suffering" (30). Furthermore, these authors claim, "It will not do, therefore, to characterize the atonement as God's punishment falling on Christ" (113). Gary Johnson describes this work as offering a "frontal assault on any concept of substitutionary atonement." See Gary L. W. Johnson, "Introduction," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 22. Another work supported by McLaren is Alan Mann's, *Atonement for a "Sinless" Society* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005). Mann states, "In an increasingly 'sinless' society, where guilt is a marginal concern, even such functional views of the atonement are wholly inadequate in expressing the actuality of the atonement" (47). See also Oakland, *Faith Undone*, 195–97, for a discussion on Marcus Borg's influence upon McLaren. Borg claims that "Jesus was almost certainly not born of a virgin, did not think of himself as the Son of God, and did not see his purpose as dying for the sins of the world. See Marcus Borg, *The God We Never Knew* (New York: HaperCollins, First Paperback edition, 1998), 25. Cf. Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 112–13; and Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 84–97.

How do these statements and McLaren's endorsements fare with Scripture's clarity on this most important matter? Did not Christ suffer on the cross as a substitute for sinners (Isa 53:4–10)? Did not Christ take upon Himself the full blow of the punishment deservedly aimed at man (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 9:27–29; 1 Pet 3:18)? Did Christ not satisfy, as man's propitiation, the divine wrath against sin on behalf of the elect (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10)? Cf. MacArthur, *Truth War*, 168.

[72] Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006), 152–53. Cf. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 105. McKnight agrees with this view of McLaren's but raises the question, "Can we have more?" See McKnight, "McLaren Emerging," 64.

[73] See McLaren, *The Last Word*, 134; and McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 235. See also Gary Gilley, "The Emerging Church," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 278 and 282.

[74] McLaren's view of final judgment ultimately does not rest upon the person and finished work of Jesus, but on "how well individuals have lived up to God's hopes and dreams for our world and for life in it." See McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 166–67.

right; falsely widens the gate of heaven to all who join the conversation to save the world through sociopolitical means;[75] waxes with uncertainty, confusion, and skepticism about the reality of Hell,[76] or critical moral crisis in culture today such as the pro-homosexual agenda; reduces the good news to an over-realized eschatology where everything is centered on the here-and-now with little, if any, *not yet* dimension;[77] or in his own words, sees the orthodox gospel truth as merely "a footnote" to a much grander gospel, his gospel—the kingdom of God.[78] This kingdom of God message, as defined by McLaren, is the main attraction of the meta-narrative of Scripture, "it's the heart and soul of the Christian

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[75] See McLaren, *The Last Word*, 35, where he states, "It bothers me to use exclusive and Jesus in the same sentence. Everything about Jesus' life and message seemed to be about inclusion, not exclusion." Gilley writes, "The emergent leaders see a wide gate opening to eternal life." See Gilley, "The Emerging Church," 284.

[76] See Leif Hansen, "Interview with Brian McLaren," *Understand the Times Website*, n.p. [cited 30 August, 2007]. Online: http://www.understandtimes.org/mclarentrans.html, for a transcript of this radio interview, which discusses McLaren's view of hell. McLaren appears to agree with Hansen that the orthodox doctrine of hell is "antithetical to the cross." The traditional doctrine of hell, according to McLaren, rejects the view of the cross as God's kingdom being ushered in by suffering and voluntary sacrifice. Rather, it relates to "inflicting violence" and supports a view that "God gets His way through coercion and violence and intimidation and domination, just like every other kingdom does. The cross isn't the center then. The cross is almost a distraction and false advertising for God." See also McLaren, *The Last Word*, which Gilley refers to as "primarily a deconstruction of the doctrine of hell. See Gilley, *The Emerging Church*," 278. Greg Gilbert's assessment of McLaren's position on hell concludes by stating, "He has done everything in his hermeneutical power to read the traditional doctrine of hell out of the Bible." See Greg Gilbert, "Saved from the Wrath of God: An Examination of Brian McLaren's Approach to the Doctrine of Hell," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 268.

Carson addresses McLaren's unease with hell and judgment in stating, "It is not surprising that McLaren is not faithful to what Scripture says on the cross of Christ, since he is not faithful to the nature of the judgment from which we must be saved. His reading of the Bible's story line turns out to be so selective that the uncomfortable bits are discretely dropped." See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 169.

[77] See Greg Gilbert, "Brian McLaren and the Gospel of Here & Now," *The 9 Marks Web Site*, n.p. [cited 4 April 2008]. Online: http://www.9marks.
.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID314526/CHID598014/CIID2, for an insightful critique of McLaren's view of the gospel that identifies two central weaknesses. First, McLaren places over-the-top emphasis on the kingdom as present, "to the relative neglect of the kingdom as eschatological" and second, "his emphasis is overwhelmingly on the kingdom as social and political, to the relative neglect of the kingdom as spiritual." McLaren's imbalanced view of eschatology/heaven seems to correlate with his departure from an orthodox view of hell. Calvin Miller's insight for preachers might aptly apply here. He writes, "Hell is on the opposite end of the teeter-totter with heaven, and things have gotten so light on the hell end, that the heaven end is flat on the ground and being nibbled at by nuances of all kinds. It was bound to happen. Nearly all great truths are bipolar (in the best sense of the word) and to eliminate one pole is to destroy the other." See Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 47. Cf. DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 187; and Cf. 2 Tim 4:1, where Paul's charge to preach the Word is couched in a vision of the coming Christ. Preachers are to preach with an end in view.

[78] McLaren, "The Method, the Message, and the Ongoing Story," 215.

message."[79] These are disturbing teachings, if not clearly heretical, which simply do not align with an orthodox, biblical, theological, and historical understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.[80]

Pagitt, unlike McLaren's wavering betrayal of the gospel, presents a more direct denouncement of what he would consider the old, outdated, orthodox good news. So how forthright has he become? Essentially in his latest work, *A Christianity Worth Believing*, Pagitt has anathematized the traditional gospel and replaced it with a new one created for the postmodern community. He rejects and re-imagines the biblical position of man's sin and separation from God; denies God as supreme judge over man's sin and the reality of eternal punishment; refutes Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross (expiation/propitiation) as the means for providing salvation, reconciliation and relationship with God; adulterates the glory set aside for Christ alone by denying His exclusivity as the only way to God the Father; and deconstructs the truth about the person and finished work of Jesus Christ by making Him no more than a mere revolutionary guide or example who ushers in world peace and invites others to follow in His way of love and harmony.[81] As with McLaren, this view of the gospel does not resemble an orthodox,

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[79] Brian McLaren, "The Secret Message of Jesus, Part II," *Cedar Ridge Community Church Web Site* [cited 8 Aug. 2008]. Online: http://www.CRCC.org/converse/talks.html.

[80] Mohler might well affirm this conclusion. He writes that McLaren's orthodoxy "bears virtually no resemblance to orthodoxy." See Mohler, "A Generous Orthodoxy." Horton writes that McLaren's moralistic message is "often indistinguishable from the moves that were made long ago by Protestant liberalism and more radical versions of various liberation theologies." See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 113. Johnson describes the "parallels between the post-conservative/emergents to Schleiermacher" as "striking." See Johnson, "Introduction," 23.

[81] See chapter 5, the "Gospel" section. The theory of Christ as example, or *Christus exemplar*, dates back to the Socinians of the sixteenth century, whose thoughts led to modern day Unitarianism. This theory holds that Christ's death teaches man how to live, while rejecting God's justice requiring payment for sin. Man essentially saves himself by following the example of Jesus by believing and trusting in God. For a brief overview of the example theory (see also moral influence) of atonement, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 581–82. Interestingly, when you add to the mix their denial of the deity of Christ, their views line up very closely with Pagitt's espoused *Christianity Worth Believing*. For an insightful comparison between Unitarianism and characteristics of emerging churches, see DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 177–78. Kluck's analysis is pertinent to this discussion. Discerning over two lists that emphasized characteristics of both parties, he states, "Both lists . . . are full of good and noble things; however, there is nothing said in either list of guiding principles about Jesus' death and resurrection and the need of both for our salvation. . . . Then the thought came to me, If you stopped a random handful of Americans on the street, they would all aspire to identifying with the life of Jesus in much the same way they would hope to identify with the life of Martin Luther King or Muhammad Ali" (178).

biblical, theological, and historical understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.[82]

Conclusively, both of these high profile proponents of Christianity preach another gospel that has little resemblance of the orthodox truth. What one pastor stated, after debating Pagitt, might also be applied to McLaren, "I have never debated theology with someone who claimed to be Christian that I had so little in common with."[83] Although limited commonality exists between their gospel and the orthodox and/or evangelical version, there clearly exists gospel commonality between these two emergent preachers. What possible differences, then, in light of these gospel similarities, exist between these two emergent leaders as alluded to in the beginning of this section?

If McLaren's gospel is disturbing, then Pagitt's gospel is dangerous. If McLaren's message blurs the line between gospel truth and heresy,[84] then Pagitt's version of the good news message re-chalks the line and then assertively crosses it—entering into clearly delineated heretical territory.[85] Therein lies the distinction

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[82] MacArthur defines Pagitt's view of the gospel as "classic universalism." Additionally, he does not believe that Pagitt is a true Christian or pastor nor does he believe that Solomon's Porch is a true church. Rather, he writes, what Pagitt espouses is a "form of false religion" and a "form of paganism." See John MacArthur, "The Emergent Church is a Form of Paganism," *Grace to You Web Site*, n.p. [cited 17 Oct. 2008]. Online: http://www.gty.org/Resources/Print/articles/10147. How could Pagitt's view of the gospel be considered biblical, when, as Horton observes, he "encourages us to think of ourselves and the lives we lead as the gospel." See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 194; and Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 30–31.

[83] Bob DeWaay, quoted by Ken Silva, "Doug Pagitt a Christian Message," *Apprising Ministries Web Site*, n.p. [cited 18 Oct. 2008]. Online: http://www.apprising.org/archives/2008/01/doug-pagitt_sha.html. John Piper shared similar remarks concerning a meeting he held with Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones. Some of Piper's comments about this meeting include: "My root sense is that ultimately, for Tony and Doug, committed relationships trump truth"; "I just don't understand the way these guys think"; "There are profound epistemological differences—ways of processing reality—that make the conversation almost impossible"; and lastly, "I can't make definitive statements about what they believe about almost anything, except for a few strong statements about certain social agendas." See John Piper, "Conversations with the Contributors," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 155. Cf. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 76–78.

[84] Although McLaren may use less candor than Pagitt about his view of the gospel, it seems clear, based on the trajectory in his writings, that in the words of Tim Challies, he continues to take steps "down the steep path that leads farther and farther away from biblical orthodoxy." McLaren, according to Challies, "Seems to be fully aware of the path he is taking and of the crowd he is taking with him." See Tim Challies, "The Gospel: Conventional vs. Emerging," *Challies Web Site*, n.p. [cited 17 Oct. 2008]. Online: http://www.challies.com/archives/article/emergent-church/the-gospel-conventional-versus-emerging.php.

[85] See Pagitt, *A Christianity Worth Believing*, 120–70; and Pagitt, "Embodied Theology," 128–29, to discover his consideration of the views held by the fifth century heretic Pelagius. Whittmer's critique of Pagitt states that he "goes beyond considering Pelagius's position and embraces it." See Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 189. Horton contends that the emergent type of moralistic

between the two emergent preachers's theological position. It is ultimately not in what they believe about the gospel, but rather it is in their approach to proclaiming it. McLaren is more selective in how he presents a double message that plays both sides of the theological fence (truth and heresy). He claims allegiance to certain theological positions while never opposing, but rather embracing, their opposites. [86] Whereas Pagitt's preaching has moved past the need to remain tethered to any appearance of a biblical gospel and/or hold to an orthodox position of the faith.

Providing a full counter argument to McLaren's and Pagitt's views of the gospel is outside the scope of this critique. However, it is important to note this aspect of their homiletical message, which reveals a deviation from, and/or selective omission of, clear truth claims of Scripture. This is not to imply that no value exist in certain aspects of their deconstructed, reconstructed, and/or rewritten gospel message. A robust discussion about the kingdom of God certainly has its place in emergent, emerging, and evangelical conversations—as does dialogue about local and global social concerns of all peoples. [87] McLaren is to be commended for raising these issues and calling the church to action.[88] Yet to see the gospel through the lens of social, political, economic, and/or ecological concerns and systemic injustices seems to have blinded both McLaren and Pagitt from a central concern of God—the sin nature of man, which separates him from a relationship with God (Rom 1:18; 3:10, 23).[89] Herein lies the good news, God has made it possible for man to be reconciled with Him and to become the righteousness of Him in Christ (2 Cor 5:21). It is through, by, and

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message "drifts toward Pelagian heresy." See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 163. Cf. Mark Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 136.

[86] MacArthur states, concerning McLaren's books, they are "full of deliberate doublespeak." See MacArthur, *Truth War*, 18. Mohler identifies this trait in his critique of *Generous Orthodoxy*. Mohler pinpoints how McLaren "claims to uphold 'consistently, unequivocally, and unapologetically' the historic creeds of the church" while at the same time he "denies that truth should be articulated in propositional form, and thus undercuts his own 'unequivocal' affirmation." See Mohler, "Generous Orthodoxy."

[87] See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 112. Despite Horton's disagreement with McLaren's view of the gospel, he does "share his interest in the wider horizon of the kingdom of God for our theology and his concern that the gospel is often reduced to a quasi-Gnostic promise of saving the soul."

[88] McKnight believes McLaren's "gospel, seen as the kingdom vision of Jesus . . . can be a rich source for Christian imagination, vision, and reflection." See McKnight, "McLaren Emerging," 60.

[89] God's holiness is also a critical component related to this discussion (Isa 6:3).

in, the person and saving work of Jesus that man can be restored with his Creator (1 Pet 3:18), become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and thus be set on a genuine path toward good works (Eph 2:8-10).[90]

This good news redemptive message, which finds its center in Christ and the cross (Rom 3:21–26; 1 Cor 2:2), has been, for all intensive purposes, by McLaren and Pagitt, handed over to a existential, liberationist (sociopolitical), process, inclusive, postmodern, and/or narrative philosophy/theology.[91] Instead of the orthodox gospel of grace being retained and proclaimed as a first order doctrine, it has been re-imagined and protested.[92] Instead of it being embraced as the "heart and soul of the Christian message," to

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[90] Carson's writing on the danger of getting the primacy of the gospel confused with social action reflects this concern identified in the preaching ministry of McLaren and Pagitt. He states the following: "Many Christians assume the gospel . . . but are passionate about something on the relative periphery: abortion, poverty, forms of worship, cultural decay, ecology, overpopulation, pornography, family breakdown, and much more. . . . From a biblical-theological perspective, these challenges, as serious as they are, are reflections of the still deeper problem—our odious alienation from God. If we tackle these problems without tackling what is central, we are merely playing around with symptoms. This is no excuse for Christians not to get involved in these and many other issues. But it is to insist that where we get involved in such issues, many of which are explicitly laid upon us in Scripture, we do so from the centre out, ie beginning with full-orbed gospel proclamation and witness and passion, and then, while acknowledging that no one can do everything, doing our 'significant something' to address the wretched entailments of sin in our world." See D. A. Carson, "The Biblical Gospel," in *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present, and Future* (ed. Steve Brady and Harold Rowdon; London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996), 83. Cf. James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (4d ed: Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 319; and DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 188. DeYoung states, "It is right and good for social action to be a partner of evangelism. But the gospel is not the summons to live a life that betters the world. The gospel is a message about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection."

[91] A cursory reading of core tenets associated with these philosophical/theological positions, in relation to sin and salvation (gospel), reveals close associations with both men's theological/philosophical beliefs—as documented in chapters 4 and 5. See Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 111–62, 243–331, 359–79. Erickson's balanced critique underscores that acknowledgement should be given where benefits arise from a given position. However, warning should also be noted when significant shortcomings are observed. Erickson's specific word of caution concerning process theology would seem to apply as a general warning to the current position and trajectory of McLaren and Pagitt's gospel message. He writes, "At what point do we have say that we can no longer identity process Christology as Christianity? How many distinctive features of what has traditionally been termed Christianity can be safely discarded before we have to say that what is left is a generic religion that is not entitled to the designation Christian (273)?" Cf. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 606–13 and 906–15.

[92] Mohler defines first-order doctrines as those "that are fundamental and essential to the Christian faith." He insists pastors should make no room for compromise with these doctrines of which would include critical aspects of the gospel such as "full deity and humanity of Christ . . . doctrine of atonement, and essentials such as justification by faith alone." "Where such doctrines are compromised," he writes, "the Christian faith falls." See Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 109. McLaren has replaced the true gospel, a first-order doctrine, with his kingdom of God message. Pagitt has dismissed the need to retain the true gospel or any doctrinal position with fervency. Caution is warranted, for as Mohler asserts, historically, "Orthodoxy and heresy has often hung on a single word, or even a syllable," such as in the case with Arius and the Council of Nicea (111). In the emergent/emerging church debate, orthodoxy and heresy hangs on the true definition of the gospel.

borrow McLaren's expression, it has been pushed to the periphery of the emergent story.[93] However, if it is proclaimed with some orthodox familiarity, it is only done so from a demoted status as a second or third order truth—if considered a part of the truth at all.[94]

So how does this compare with the gospel writer's version of the good news, the apostles' version of the gospel, and the churches message down through the centuries? Did Jesus leave any question about His purpose for coming (Mark 10:45; John 12:27–28a)? Can the gospel absent of the atonement truly be considered good news?[95] Can the good news message gutted of its core, the true meaning of the cross, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:3–4), really have any hope of bringing genuine kingdom transformation—peace, justice, hope, and love? Does not man ultimately need a transformation of the heart, a new birth, a divine work of the Spirit of God (spiritual regeneration), which He initiates by drawing individuals to a humble submission and allegiance to the person and finished work of Christ (John 1:12–13; 3:3; 6:44; Rom 10:9–10, 13)?[96] If Jesus refused to stray from the Father's will in going to the cross (Luke 22:42)—making His work at Calvary the centerpiece of the good news message (John 3:14–15)—then how can self-professing preachers of the way of Jesus

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[93] See footnote 68.

[94] Second-order doctrines are "essential to church life and necessary for the ordering of the local church, but that, in themselves, do not define the gospel," argues Mohler. Additionally, he defines third-order doctrines as truths open for hearty theological debate, but "do not threaten the fellowship" of the local church. Ibid., 110.

[95] Without the atoning work of Christ, man is in sin, separated from God, and awaits wrath and judgment because of his refusal to repent and receive forgiveness and reconciliation with God (John 3:18-19). Piper writes that postmoderns (by implication, emergents like McLaren and Pagitt) have "no place for the biblical truth of the wrath of God. . . . no place for a wrath-bearing Savior who endures God's curse that we might go free." He also chastises men like McLaren who "write glowing blurbs on the flaps of his book," in referring to the work of Steve Chalke (footnote 72), which he says blasphemes "God's love over God's wrath in the death of his beloved Son." See John Piper, "Joy and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 76.

[96] See Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 32–44, for an insightful critique of the emergent view of what one must believe in order to be saved. He also highlights McLaren's omission of the story of Nicodemus and the kingdom of God in his specific work that deals with this topic. He writes, "Perhaps he did not include it in *The Secret Message of Jesus* because its call for regeneration does not fit his understanding of the kingdom" (184). Cf. DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 188. DeYoung makes the same observation. He writes, "What is absent from the emergent understanding of the kingdom is the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3)." He also highlights the emergents lack of calling people to conversion by repenting of sin—a clear aim of Jesus and John the Baptist (Matt 3:2; 4:17).

deliberately proclaim a good news message that is different than what Jesus proclaimed about it Himself?

Plainly stated, McLaren and Pagitt's view of the gospel simply does not square with the Savior or the Scriptures that testify of Him—the ultimate truth. The gospel, as argued by Horton in his critique of emergents, is not a program for "national and global redemption,"—ridding the world of McLaren's injustice hit list, "global warming, poverty, AIDS, and capitalistic greed," despite the critical importance of some of these issues.[97] Enlisting "Jesus as a mascot" for such programs and thus redefining the gospel as man's deeds (moralism/works) over and above creeds (doctrine/God's mighty acts of redemption), in seeking to eradicate these injustices, writes Horton, "confuses law and gospel." [98] Moreover, he declares, "The central message of Christianity is not a worldview, a way of life, or a program for personal and societal change; it is a gospel."[99] Consequently then, the gospel message preached by both McLaren and Pagitt leaves out critical elements of truth, central components of the cross,[100] and ultimately the glory and uniqueness of Christ.[101]

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[97] Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 114.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., 105. Like a report given to "an appointed messenger who arrives from the battlefield," he is to "get the story right and then report it, ensuring that the message is delivered by word (preaching). . . ." Horton, might argue, that McLaren and Pagitt simply do not get the story right.

[100] McLaren gives little space to the significance of the cross in his books. Gilbert finds this "puzzling." He believes, "[McLaren] has lost sight of the meaning and centrality of the cross. . . ." See Gilbert, "Saved from the Wrath of God," 265, 268 respectively. See C. J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2006); Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1965); and R. C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2007), for a different perspective on the cross than McLaren or Pagitt. Sproul believes, "The work that Jesus did on the cross is the very essence of the gospel." He also writes, "If you take away the substitutionary atonement, you empty the cross of its meaning and drain all the significance out of the passion of our Lord Himself. If you do that, you take away Christianity itself" (81).

[101] Gilbert's assessment of McLaren's atonement theology, which he calls "an audio-visual spectacle," could likewise apply to Pagitt. This "audio-visual" atonement view presents McLaren's understanding of Jesus' work at Calvary in two lights. First, it is a picture of weakness symbolizing kindness and forgiveness, not violence, retaliation, or revenge. Second, it is a picture of God dealing with pain and forgiveness. In neither case, argues Gilbert, "does the cross actually accomplish or do anything." He continues, "How does a mere display of weakness or of God's pain do justice to Paul's statement that we are 'justified by his blood' and 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 5:9-10)? The cross was not just a means for God to show the world something, whether weakness or pain or love. It was a saving act. It accomplished something. As the apostle John puts it, 'The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin' (1 John 1:7)." Additionally, Gilbert states that due to McLaren's "unwillingness to address the reality of eternity," because of his present day, social and political kingdom theology, there exists "no obvious place for concepts like substitution, justification, atonement, sacrifice, or propitiation," in McLaren's gospel. See Gilbert, "Brian McLaren and the Gospel."

Therefore, what is preached as the gospel is no gospel at all, but merely a false and/or incomplete version of truth that does not align with the veracity of the timeless truth of Scripture.[102] Just how their version of truth, as seen through their understanding of the Bible and the gospel, influences their philosophy of preaching will now become the next topic for discussion.

Mentality

Historically those who hold to a high view of Scripture hold to a high view of preaching. This conviction stems from believing that what the Bible says, God says.[103] Since McLaren and Pagitt approach the text from a neo-orthodox perspective, it should naturally follow that their preaching philosophies will present a considerable paradigm shift from a historical, traditional view of biblical proclamation. It is also likely that this shift will reflect a devaluing of heralding truth as a central proponent of the Christian faith and practice.[104] Although diversity exists, there is homiletical like-mindedness shared by both men that is central to their

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Leif Hansen, in an interview with McLaren, made the statement that he was wrestling with "what makes Jesus' life and example and living love to the death more unique than any other." McLaren's response offered a sympathetic agreement with his struggle, a pointing of the blame finger to the uniqueness of Jesus being misrepresented by "colonial, Roman Christianity," in addition to the following remark, "Well, this is a subject that I am really interested in." See Hansen, "Interview with Brian McLaren." Instead of sympathizing with the denial of Jesus as God, which is where the conversation drifted, why not *exegete*, exalt, and exult over divine revelation's claim that Jesus is God? John Piper has made the statement that "we do not honor fully what we don't enjoy." In McLaren's case, it might be appropriate to add that we seemingly do not honor fully what we do not believe. See John Piper, "Preaching as Expository Exultation for the Glory of God," in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 110.

[102] When Scripture is undermined as the Word of God, then its gospel message invariably becomes maligned as well. MacArthur has observed that the emergent movement has sought to undermine key distinctive doctrines of the faith such as inerrancy, authority of Scripture, original sin, and the exclusivity of Christ, which he sees as the same ploy of "modernists and theological liberals." He concludes, "Almost any biblical doctrine and evangelical distinctive you can name has at one point or another been maligned by this or that celebrity in the Emerging Church movement." See MacArthur, *Truth War*, 169.

[103] David Larsen states in the opening pages of his thick overview of the history of biblical preaching that "what we believe about the Bible shapes our view of what preaching is to be." See David Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 13.

[104] Larsen believes that "preaching has always been the life-blood of the Christian church." See Larsen, *The Company of Preachers*, 14. Cf. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971; repr., 1977), 11, where he states, "You cannot read the history of the church, even in a cursory manner, without seeing that preaching has always occupied a central and predominating position in the life of the church, particularly in Protestantism"; and Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 37, where he argues that "both testaments of Scripture" portray the importance of the "centrality of preaching."

preaching philosophies. Preaching to postmodern sensibilities, preaching as dialogue, preaching with a posture of humility, and preaching as one without authority presents four such commonalities that will serve as the focus of this section.

Preaching to Postmodern Sensibilities

Arguably, McLaren and Pagitt's preaching mentality is grounded more in postmodern thought than biblical truth.[105] Like their abandonment of an orthodox view of Scripture and the gospel, this should come as no surprise. After all, postmodern Christian discourse—being missional in an emerging culture with the gospel, or in emergent terms what has become known as the "kingdom of God" or "hope-filled Christianity"—provided the initial platform that launched their national teaching ministries.[106] Now a decade later, both men may be growing weary of the postmodern debate; yet they none-the-less have accomplished part of their pastoral mission by proclaiming Christianity from an insider's (postmodern) vantage point.[107]

Both men have found success, to some degree, to use McLaren's phraseology, in "debugging" their faith, or for this discussion, their old preaching mindset, from the "viruses of modernity."[108] As Pagitt boldly writes, "As the pastor I'm often referred to as 'the preacher.' And frankly, this is a role I no longer relish."[109] He continues, "There was a time when I felt my ability to deliver sermons was a high calling that I sought to refine but didn't need to redefine. Those days are gone. Now I find myself regularly

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[105] While both men reveal some similarities with traditional preaching, Pagitt has gone on the offensive in distancing himself from what would be considered a historical homiletical lineage. See footnote 103.

[106] Refer back to chapters 2 and 3 of this work.

[107] See Brian McLaren, "Church Emerging: Or Why I Still Use the Word Postmodern but with Mixed Feelings," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (eds. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 141–52, for more current discussion about his use of the term postmodernism.

[108] Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 189. One has to wonder based on some of the errant teachings of these men that if debugging their theology and preaching of what they consider to be modern viruses literally leads to scriptural nothingness. As Phillip Jensen explains, "As modernity gives way to postmodernity the very notion that the text had a meaning to exegete disappears into the mist." See Phillip Jensen, "Preaching the Word Today," in *Preach The Word* (ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 166.

[109] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 10.

redefining my role and the role of preaching."[110] This redefined role of preaching for the postmodern context has unquestionably welcomed controversial changes to what has historically been known as biblical preaching.[111] Gone is the trust in the all sufficient Word of God to transform lives (Isa 55:10–11; Rom 10:17), the fearful responsibilities of the herald (Deut 18:18b; Jer 23:29; 2 Tim 4:1–2), the pressures of rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15), contending for the faith once passed down to the saints (Jude 3), the call of humanity to repentance (Acts 2:38), or preaching the Word of God with specificity, perspicuity, doctrinal essentials (1 Cor 15:1–4; 1 Tim 4:13, 15; 2 Tim 3:16–17), and/or absolute truthfulness (Prov 12:17; 14:5).[112] And, as discovered with their interpretation of the gospel, gone is the exclusive, unique, redemptive message of the person and finished work of Jesus along with the unction, urgency, and boldness to proclaim His message as given in Scripture (Eph 6:19–20; Gal 1:8–9).[113]

In place of traditional preaching, McLaren and Pagitt have embraced a postmodern, post-traditional-homiletical mindset that welcomes skepticism, ambiguity, multiperspectivalism, experience, mystery, dialogue, questions, inclusiveness, universalism, and every generous orthodoxy under the sun.[114] The aim of these traits in their preaching has been to connect with the emerging culture, which

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[110] Ibid.

[111] See Holland, "Progressional Dialogue & Preaching," 220–22, for a review of Pagitt's progressional dialogue approach to preaching. Holland critiques Pagitt for his reckless reconstruction of the history of preaching and argues emphatically that what Pagitt calls speaching—"a one way speech," which he believes was not the church norm until the 1700s (See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 11–12, 113)—has been done down through the ages including by Jesus Himself. If Jesus, Paul, the apostles, and other historical homileticians such as: Polycarp (A.D. 68–160), Ignatius (30–110), Tertullian (170–240), Augustine (354–430), Chrysostom (347–407), Anselm (1033–1109), John Huss (1349–1384), Martin Luther (1483–1586), John Knox (1505–1572), John Calvin (1509–1564), and Richard Baxter (1615–1691) have understood preaching to be a public speech act or speaking event, and in light of the biblical evidence such as recorded in Acts (e.g., 2:14–36; 3:12–26; 7:1–53; 13:15–41; 17:22–31; 22:1–21), it would then seem appropriate for Pagitt to reconsider his disdain for preaching as public discourse.

[112] See Larsen, *The Company of Preachers*, 9–10 for a listing of the foundational preaching traits he associates with biblical Christianity. McLaren and Pagitt appear to approach the sacred desk from a different philosophical disposition.

[113] The demise of gospel clarity (as observed in McLaren and Pagitt) could lead to the dismissal of what MacArthur believes is the call of the Christian/preacher—a "definitive commission to deliver the gospel message boldly as His ambassadors." See McArthur, *Truth War*, 25.

[114] Refer back to chapter 4 and 5. Mohler's critique of McLaren's inclusive, generous orthodoxy includes this remark about postmodernism: "The worldview of postmodernism—complete with an epistemology that denies the possibility of or need for propositional truth—affords the movement an opportunity to hop, skip, and jump throughout the Bible and the history of Christian thought in order to take whatever pieces they want from one theology and attach them, like doctrinal post-it notes, to whatever picture they would want to draw." See Mohler, "A Generous Orthodoxy."

according to McLaren, requires getting a "feel for postmodernity from the inside."[115] As stated above, both men have accomplished this insider objective. Yet it would be a stretch to consider their accomplishment as laudable for true biblical proclamation. Rather, a strong word of homiletical caution is warranted. Certainly indigenous preaching in a postmodern culture that seeks to contextualize the gospel in a way that is better understood is to be expected of any responsible homiletician.[116] However, danger looms where preachers in an attempt to reach postmoderns become postmodern themselves (*going native*)—actually becoming converted to their world view thus compromising or potentially abandoning the tenets of their own Christian faith.[117] Based on the evidence presented in this work, it appears that this is the case for both McLaren and Pagitt.[118]

Stott, despite having found his preaching stride in the modern context, offers a needed balance to this discussion through his now iconic homiletical bridge metaphor. In *Between Two Worlds*, Stott uses this bridge analogy to emphasize the importance of relating the "given the message to the existential situation, or . . . to 'contextualize' the Word of God."[119] He believes that a chasm exist

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[115] McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 159.

[116] Millard J. Erickson, "On Flying In Theological Fog," 342. Phil Johnson provides a series of blogposts against the current canonization of contextualization. See Phil Johnson, "Why I Don't Like the C-Word," *PyroManiacs Web Site*, n.p. [cited 25 March 2008]. Online: http://www.teampyro .blogspot.com/2008/03/why-i-dont-like-c-word.html. If the meaning of contextualization focused on nothing more than translation and illustration he would embrace the term for Christianity, but, he adds, it always means "something more." Cf. MacArthur, *Truth War*, 167.

[117] Ibid. Miller warns of this danger by writing that preachers "must never join the secular world nor adopt its bogus values. Honest biblical exposition sets orange cones around the unsafe lanes of the human journey." See Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 17. See Albert Mohler, "Preaching with the Culture in View," in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 65–87, for an insightful discussion on how to view the culture in light of biblical exposition. Two dangers exist in preaching today. First, some preachers disregard and/or disengage from culture completely; and, second, some "allow culture to dominate in their ministries" (66). Mohler argues in this writing that either extreme presents "perilous errors of which every preacher should be aware" (66). Cf. Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 227, where he warns, "Studies on contemporary life, whether of a demographic or psychological kind, are helpful in understanding the way life is in a (post) modern world, but these studies do not themselves give the church its agenda." Phil Johnson claims that making "the gospel more palatable" so that the church can "assimilate into the world as much as possible—and above all, be cool—so that the world (or some offbeat subculture) will like us". . . . is the actual "driving idea behind . . . the Emerging church approach" to contextualization. See Johnson, "Why I Don't Like the C-Word."

[118] Cf. Gilley, "The Emergent Church," 278, where he writes, "Before the emergent church leaders have even finished, all the essential teachings of the Bible have been deconstructed, redefined, or dismissed." Their replacement, he argues, is "mystery and questions."

[119] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982; repr., 1997), 137.

between the biblical world and the present age and thus diligent effort must be mustered by "each new Christian generation" toward relating biblical truth to each "particular culture."[120]

From Stott's homiletical/cultural vantage point, two mistakes are most common with preaching that seeks to communicate with relevance to the present age. First, preachers who hold to historic Christian orthodoxy tend never to "earth" their preaching—staying on the Bible side of the gulf thus never constructing the bridge to the present culture.[121] Second, preachers with a liberal message tend to live too comfortably on the "contemporary side of the great divide"—their sermons being "earthed in the real world" yet no longer wed to biblical revelation.[122] Thus, Stott argues that it is unfortunate that "conservatives are biblical but not contemporary, while on the other liberals and radicals are contemporary but not biblical."[123] Both extremes present a homiletical dilemma.

The solution to this polarization of homiletical ideas, which represents two legitimate concerns, is to combine them—to "conserve God's revelation" and "to relate meaningfully to real people in the real world."[124] Accomplishing this aim requires building homiletical bridges anchored in both the biblical world and the postmodern one. Constructing these bridges "firmly anchored on both sides of the chasm" enables the postmodern preacher to refuse compromising "the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in which it was spoken."[125] Thus, the dilemma is solved by honoring both preaching objectives (Acts 17; Jude 3).

McLaren, Pagitt, and the emerging church at large might rightly deserve credit at this juncture for their challenge to the church to follow in the way of Jesus as a model missionary by

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[120] Ibid., 139. Stott remarks that "the world is now changing so rapidly that each rising generation feels challenged by the width of the gulf and by the need to construct a new bridge." However, in the case of McLaren and Pagitt, a new bridge erroneously implies a new message. Cf. D. A Carson, "Challenges for the Twenty-first-century Pulpit," in *Preach the Word* (ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 186–87. Here Carson comments on how the cultural pace of change for the twenty-first century will far surpass the changes and challenges of the one just passed.

[121] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 140.

[122] Ibid., 143.

[123] Ibid., 144.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 145.

aggressively engaging the culture.[126] However, chastisement is also justified for modeling what Stott might refer to as "sad and reprehensible"—for "in discarding the ancient formulations they . . . discard the truth formulated, and so throw out the baby with the bathwater."[127] Preaching today can not afford to be either/or, nor has it ever been optional, declares Stott. He claims, "The earthing of the Word in the world . . . is an indispensable characteristic of true Christian preaching."[128] Therefore, if McLaren and Pagitt desire to preach from a Christian mindset, not merely a postmodern one, it will require two ongoing initiatives. First, biblical preaching will seek to understand, hold to, and proclaim apostolic teaching as immutable truth.[129] Second, it will seek out knowledge and understanding of an ever-changing culture in order to discern how to communicate this truth. However, the ultimate aim for Christian preaching is not leading people to conform to culture. Nor, argues Mohler, is it "primarily about cultural transformation or cultural renewal or cultural recovery."[130] Rather it is about leading people to be transformed by Christ through the preaching of the gospel to

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[126] Mark Driscoll offers gratitude to emergents on this topic. He writes, "The Emergent connection of the humble incarnation of Jesus into culture as our missional model is a glorious rediscovery of a biblical truth." See Mark Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World, in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Grand Rapids: Crossway, 2007), 130.

Stott cautions against questioning the motive of preachers who seem to have abandoned the gospel believing that they should receive credit when their aim is to contextualize the gospel for their own time. He states that their aim (in some instances) is "not destruction but reconstruction." They desire, argues Stott, to "restate the Christian faith in terms which are intelligible, meaningful, and credible to their secular colleagues and friends." Thus, "All honour to them in so far as they are genuinely wrestling with the need to discover the modern gospel for the modern world." See Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 143. Stott's concern to communicate the gospel with understanding for the present culture is to be commended, yet any abandonment of the true gospel, for whatever purposes—orthopraxy and/or postmodernism—is still heresy and must be exposed. McLaren and Pagitt may have begun their preaching journey with the motive mentioned above, but at some juncture in their teaching ministries, a drastic philosophical paradigm shift occurred where they now seek to fulfill the first objective, "destruction," as much as the second, "reconstruction." Despite the reason, no compromise can be tolerated with the true gospel for today's message. As Jensen rightly states on the subject, "There are not many gospels but only one." And, "The gospel proclamation falls into the category of true or false, not opinion or interpretation." Credit for their motive, which cannot ultimately be known, is not the main concern, but rather the warning and/or anathematization, if need be, of any false gospel that leads others astray. See Phillip Jensen, "Preaching the Word Today," 158–59.

[127] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 144.

[128] Ibid., 145.

[129] Wells emphatically states that the "identifying mark" of a Christian should be his or her belief in the apostolic teachings of the church—"It should explain how they think and who they are in their souls." See Wells, *The Courage To Be Protestant*, 229.

[130] Mohler, "Preaching with the Culture in View," 67.

sinners and then living lives in culture, like Jesus, for the Father's glory (Rom 10:15; 12:2; Matt 5:13–16).[131]

Preaching as Dialogue/Conversation

Heralding is out and hugging is in might be a stretch for a homiletical metaphor to describe the difference between emergent and traditional preaching, or what Pagitt refers to as "speaching." However, it does hopefully provide a picture representing the shift away from preaching as the voice of God, through the voice of a called messenger, to preaching as the voice of God, through the embracing of multiple voices of a gathered community/church.[132]

Both McLaren and Pagitt champion this re-discovered homiletical approach, but of the two, Pagitt stands as the lead spokesperson for what he considers the best postmodern means of communication.[133] This interactive, facilitating role of the preacher aligns more closely with what might be considered small group discipleship within the contemporary church.[134] McLaren and Pagitt

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[131] Ibid. Mohler sees this approach to engaging culture as being a "different vantage" point compared to others conversing about culture, realizing that all things, including culture, is passing and that the church's mission is to see all people groups come to a saving knowledge of Christ. Proclaiming an orthodox gospel to the world represents a different point of view than McLaren or Pagitt's.

[132] Gary Gilley, critiquing emergent pastor Rob Bell, notes that Bell chooses "just hugs" over answers in responding to serious life issues such as: heaven, hell, the devil, God, love, or rape. See Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 167–68. Bell, similar to a remark that could have been written by McLaren or Pagitt (both of which have shared Bell's pulpit), states, when dealing with these most important questions, "Most of my responses were about how we need others to carry our burdens and how our real needs in life are *not for more information* but for loving community with other people on journey" (emphasis added). Yes, Christian community is important. However, therapeutic group dialogue sessions that honor experience, mystery, and inquiry, above revealed revelation "in the knowledge of Him," seems to misrepresent the role of preaching. One aim of preaching is to teach truth so that others will be "speaking the truth in love" in order to "grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ," which leads to genuine fellowship and community where the "whole body" is "joined and knit together" (Eph 1:17; 4:15–16). See Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29–30.

[133] Dialogue/conversational preaching has been around for decades, while the actual method dates back to at least Plato. See Kenton Anderson, "Preaching As Dialogue: Moving Beyond the 'Speaching' of the Word," *Preaching* 22 (2007): 10. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones addressed this exact emergent homiletical mindset and method, which was gaining interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 45ff. Other published works on dialogue preaching include Thomas Conley, *Two in the Pulpit: Sermons in Dialogue* (Waco: Word, 1973); John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); and Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

[134] Benefits to this type of biblical instruction can include interaction by the participants through raising questions and providing insights to the biblical discussion, which offers increased opportunities to clarify biblical truth and/or refute biblical error, increased insights into the meaning and application of God's Word, a chance to hear how God is working in the lives of the people, and

want to incorporate and/or define preaching in accordance with some of the benefits associated with this form of teaching. Of the potential benefits to small group teaching dynamics, increased relationship building appears to be the main advantage that drives this preaching philosophy.[135] Fostering relationships through community activity, which welcomes everyone's voice, and from Pagitt's perspective, a chance to hear from the "preachers among us," turns the corporate teaching time into a multiperspectival sharing event where the priesthood of the believers gets recast as the *preacherhood* of all believers.[136]

Placing an importance upon conversation in order to build relationships and disciple the body into a mature walk of faith certainly has its priorities within the church—as is recovering "every-member ministry."[137] However, is corporate conversation, where everyone's voice is welcomed and received at the homiletical table, a true representation of biblical preaching and/or the called role of every believer? It would appear not when confronting the Scriptures.

Holland, in his critique of Pagitt's priesthood of the believers argument for "interactive communication" qualifying as preaching, acknowledges that the Bible certainly highlights the "shared responsibility of all believers to evangelize (1 Pet 2:5, 9–10; Rev 1:6)."[138] Nor, he asserts, should anyone ignore the importance of direct access to God through Christ (Heb 10:19–22) when assessing the value of the priesthood of believers, which the

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an opportunity to foster relationships through connecting on a more intimate, personal level with the listener. Small group teaching/discipleship has its advantages and place in the church, but this does not diminish the role of a called, focused, and intentional teacher for such a learning event. Dialogue without proper biblical leadership can potentially do more harm than good. Anderson, writing on behalf of dialogical preaching, shares a childhood memory of his dad referring to the activities of an adult Sunday school class as "'a lot of pooled ignorance.'" See Anderson, "Preaching as Dialogue," 9. To protect against such foolishness, teachers have a responsibility to provide hermeneutical guidelines and to insure that the text is handled with care—as writes Howard and William Hendricks—so as not to misread, distort, and/or contradict the text nor place the meaning of the text under personal subjectivism, relativism, and/or overconfidence. See Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living By the Book* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 202–7.

[135] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 21.

[136] Ibid., 26. Holland argues that "most of Pagitt's arguments for progressional dialogue are appeals to the reasonableness of it. But his most ardent biblical defense is his understanding that the priesthood of all believers sanctions the preacherhood of all believers." See Holland, "Progressional Dialogue & Preaching," 219.

[137] Arturo G. Azurdia III, *Spirit Empowered Preaching: The Vitality of the Holy Spirit in Preaching* (Britain: Mentor, 1998), 84.

[138] Holland, "Preaching & Dialogue," 219.

Reformers emphasized.[139] However, a believer's call to utilize his given talents by participating in ministry does not automatically confirm a calling to preach—even if one possesses the Spirit of Christ and has a genuine aspiration to do so. As Azurdia states, "The experience of regeneration and the presence of the indwelling Spirit, matched with sincere desire, does not fit a man for the ministry of proclamation. Such is the consequence of the sovereign calling and gifting of God."[140] The mere biblical fact that God calls certain men to lead and proclaim His message means that not everyone will be called to shepherd and preach (Eph 4:11). Some will be leaders; some will be followers. For McLaren and more so with Pagitt, to maintain a preaching philosophy that places the listener in this role seems to disregard Scripture's instruction. This can ultimately lead to an increase of heretical teachers within the church and an undermining of the biblical mandate given to those whom the Holy Spirit has genuinely set aside for the preaching ministry (Acts 20:28–30; 2 Cor 11:12–15).[141] The call to teach God's Word simply is not given to every believer, and stern warning and consequences comes with the responsibility (Jas 3:1; Jude; 2 Pet 2).[142]

Furthermore, not only does the Bible exclude some from preaching, but also it presents a different vision for proclamation than merely a corporate talk, fireside chat, or community share time.[143] Based on the very nature of the gospel message, which Azurdia refers to as "the invasion of God into human history," it

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 86. Scripture testifies of this truth through numerous recordings of called men like Moses (Exod 3:4–22), Samuel (1 Sam 3:4), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4–10), the disciples of Christ (Mark 3:13–19), Paul (Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:15), and Barnabas (Acts 13:2). See Olfords, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 7–8. The Olfords write, "The call to preach is the sovereign initiative of God in the life and experience of the one who is predestinated to fulfill that role" (8).

[141] MacArthur sees the infiltration of heretical teachers into the church as the "greatest danger facing Christians today." He writes, "Anyone can declare himself 'evangelical' and make himself a teacher—and who's to say otherwise?" See MacArthur, *Truth War*, 172.

[142] See Exodus 16 for an example of God's wrath against men who despise or reject authority and seek leadership positions against His will and calling. Jude applies this same warning for the New Testament church (Jude 11).

[143] Mohler asserts, "The very idea that preaching can be transformed into a dialogue between the pulpit and the pew indicates the confusion of our era." See Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 71. Cf. Mike Gilbart-Smith, "A Conversational Approach: Will it Preach?" *9Marks Web Site*, n.p. [cited 24 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://www.9marks.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID314526%7CCHID775978%7CCIID2326600,00.html. Gilbert-Smith, after discussing scriptural evidence for the edification of the church by God called preachers, writes, "I do not assume that congregational singing would be more edifying if we all took turns on the piano. Why should I assume that preaching would be better shared by all?"

requires, calls for, and demands to be announced, declared, and proclaimed.[144] Azurdia asserts,

> God has intervened to address the human dilemma by means of His redemptive achievements. Hence, the good news is to be announced. It is to be proclaimed. God is not negotiating with this message. He is not asking for discussion or attempting to strike a bargain. As the Lord of the universe He is declaring a word that demands compliance from His creation.[145]

This declared word is demanded by God to be preached to the nations by those whom He calls to be His appointed heralds (*kerysso*) and emblazoned messengers (*euangelizo*) of the good news.[146] Deliberate proclamation through a speech event that makes known what has already been given is more than a share time, it is a declare time—*kairos* moments divinely appointed and arranged by God (Neh 8:1–12; Acts 2:14–36).[147] Miller is right,

> [What] lies at the heart of Scripture: God has a word for us, not an opinion. The kingdom of God is not a discussion club. The church doesn't gather on Sunday to invite opinion. It gathers to hear the Bible—the Word of God—the wisdom of ancient saints and martyrs comes down to the current calendar after a march of centuries. Preaching the Word lays down that one great argument

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[144] Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 88. Gilbart-Smith, in his critique of *Preaching Re-Imagined*, writes, "I wonder if the muddle of so many voices is one of the reasons why Pagitt's book offers no clear expression of the gospel, even though he claims to be evangelical." See Gilbart-Smith, "A Conversational Approach."

[145] Ibid.

[146] See Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*, 52–53, for a chart of Greek words used in the New Testament for preaching and communication. *Kerusso* means to "herald, proclaim, publish, announce," while *euangelizo* means to "announce and emblazon the good news" (52). Holland argues that the New Testament preachers carried the same call as the Old Testament prophets in that "they functioned as ambassadors for God, bringing His message(s) through a speech event." See Holland, "Preaching & Dialogue," 218. The Christian preacher, however, is not a prophet in the sense that he is receiving new revelation to deliver—"no original revelation is given to him" argues Stott; rather, "His task is to expound the revelation which has been given once for all." See John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961; repr., 1981), 12.

[147] Pagitt refers to a conversation between Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10) as an example of progressional dialogue, yet this does not seem to be representative of the sermons recorded in Acts (3:12–26; 7:1–53; 13:15–41; 17: 22–31; 22:1–21), which would clearly qualify to what he calls "speaching." See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 55-59; and Holland, "Preaching and Dialogue," 218-19.

that invites no dissent.[148]

Does this truth eliminate the need for dialogue around the Word of God? No. However, Azurdia is equally right, "It is for this reason that small group Bible Studies can never replace the preaching of the gospel. . . . To substitute sharing and discussion for preaching is to risk the integrity of the gospel itself."[149] Turning preaching events into progressional dialogue sessions that do not "precisely define belief," but rather "share stories that welcome our hopes and ideas and participation" just might be, based on Pagitt's anathematization of the gospel (and McLaren's abandonment of it), a clear evidence where share time has led to stray time—a departure from the immutable truths of the historic gospel.[150]

If preaching gets redefined as conversation that welcomes multiple voices, view points, values, and veracity claims (in appeasement to postmodern perspectivalism), then what affect will this have on the church's responsibility to teach and pass on the eternal doctrines of the faith (Jude 3)? At least for Pagitt, it nearly nullifies the need for this role within the church. Pagitt contends that preachers "ought to understand churches as being more like prophetic communities than Christian teaching sites."[151] If Pagitt's call for "prophetic communities" means welcoming prophetic preachers called to the task of teaching Scripture to the church, then this is commendable. Yet how could this be the case if he is calling for the church's teaching function to be re-imagined from its biblical role?[152]

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[148] Miller, *Preaching*, 46-47.

[149] Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 88.

[150] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 166. Horton is dead on in raising the question, "What could be less authentic and honest than assuming that our lives can preach better than the gospel?" See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 157. MacArthur believes that the "rhetoric of the Emerging Church movement" reflects the "medium of postmodern dialogue," which "instantly and automatically changes the message." The message affected is the "central propositions and bedrock convictions of biblical Christianity" such as the inspiration and the authority of the Bible, the gospel, and the exclusivity of Christ. In order to reach postmoderns, a "retooling of the message" and a "revamping of the means by which we deliver it," presents what MacArthur believes is the emerging church's methodological mindset. See MacArthur, *Truth War*, 17–18.

[151] Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 159. Likewise when McLaren speaks of theology being more about searching than finding, religion being more about what is good instead of what is true, along with the dismissal of objective truth, it undermines a central function of the preacher's role within the church as a guardian and teacher of eternal truth, which is to be passed on from generation to generation. See Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 86.

[152] Pagitt states that it is not the preacher's responsibility "to present truth claims to non-truth holders so they will accept them." This undermines the call to teach truth and persuade people to walk in it (2 Cor 5:11). See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 137.

Pagitt's position obviously presents a philosophical break from the view of the historical church, its preachers, and most importantly the Scriptures.[153] Apostolic Christianity, argues Wells, "was shaped into a set of clear teachings," known now as "the doctrines of Scripture."[154] This "teaching," described in varied ways by the New Testament writers, as "the standard of teaching," "doctrine," "the faith," "the truth," "pattern of sound words," and/or "the deposit," served and serves as the very foundation and understanding of Christianity—its value, need, and given command to be taught cannot not be overestimated.[155] Wells makes this obviously clear,

> This is what the apostles taught, it is what they believed, it is what they "delivered" to the church, it is what is "entrusted" to the church. Christians are those who "believe" this teaching, who "know" it, who "have" it, who "stand" in it, and who are "established" in it. The New Testament letters were written to remind believers about their responsibilities in relation to this teaching, this faith that has been delivered to the church in its final and completed form. The apostles, we read, write to "remind" them of it, urge them to "pay close attention" to it, to "stand firm" in it, to "follow" it, to "hold" onto it, to "guard" it as one might a precious jewel, and to "contend" earnestly for this truth.[156]

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[153] Stott highlights the preaching/teaching role of Paul in Ephesus, where he "went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months" and then upon rejection withdrew and reasoned "daily in the school of Tyrannus. . . . for two years" (Acts 19:8–10). Some manuscripts add that this teaching time went from the fifth to tenth hour. Stott then remarks, "A daily five-hour lecture throughout two years! That works out at over 25,000 hours of gospel teaching! . . . There is no doubt that the early apostolic kerygma was full of solid didache." Of further interest to this discussion is Stott's assessment that New Testament conversions were often spoken in terms of "response not to Christ but to the 'the truth.'" He writes, "It is 'believing the truth' (2 Thess. 2:10–13), 'acknowledging the truth' (2 Tim. 2:25, Tit. 1:1), 'obeying the truth' (Rom. 2:8:32; 1 Tim. 2:4, 4:3; 1 John 2:21), while the preaching itself is 'the open statement of the truth' (2 Cor. 4:2)." See Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, 56. Cf. Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 150, where he comments, "Specialists . . . know that early Christianity's emphasis on belief and truth was a major departure from the surrounding religions. Christianity's focus on preaching and teaching and discussion, on words and hearing and persuasion, was viewed as so extraordinary by outsiders that in their view Christianity was more a philosophical movement than a traditional religion."

[154] Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 84.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

Thus, in light of the clear claims of Scripture, that the church is to be a learning community, and the fact that it calls for overseers who then must be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2), it would then appear that Pagitt, who calls for the church to deconstruct itself as a teaching center, might be out of touch with the Scriptures he claims to love and the teaching of Jesus whom he professes to follow (Matt 28:19–20).[157]

Ironically, in practice, both Pagitt and McLaren, despite their pronounced uncertainties and expressed disdain for objective knowable truth, still teach specific, propositional messages—even if, at times, their points are hidden behind the narrative or submerged in mystery. The difference then, in relationship to traditional preaching, resides in their postmodern libertine spirit that openly adjusts the message and therefore ignores what Wells refers to as the "apostolic injunctions to stand firm and to follow, hold and guard it" when speaking of the immutable doctrines of the Christian faith.[158] This denial and replacement of the Bible's constant message for an emerging one fits well with a postmodern homiletical mindset that views preaching as conversation. However, it does not align well with Scripture, which calls the preacher to submit to and proclaim with authority—as one under authority of the Word and the authority of the call of God.[159]

Preaching with a Posture of Humility

Homiletical humility represents a cardinal virtue for McLaren, Pagitt, and other emergent/emerging leaders. Of course, such a personal trait is honorable, commendable, and most importantly biblical. Scripture is replete with the call for Christian humility—

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[157] Holland claims that Scripture obviously places an "apostolic accent on prescriptive teaching in the church." Examples include 1 Tim 3:2 where the overseer must have the gift of teaching, 1 Tim 4:11 where Timothy was instructed to "prescribe and teach things concerning the gospel," 1 Tim 4:13, 16 where Timothy was to "give particular attention to his teaching," 1 Tim 6:2 where Timothy was to "exhort believers how to conduct themselves in their occupations," and 2 Tim 3:16 where Paul clearly establishes the Word as being "profitable for teaching." See Holland, "Preaching & Dialogue," 219–20.

[158] Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 85.

[159] Another critical issue at stake with this discussion involves the biblical mandate of obedience. Miller observes that "for postmoderns, discussing the Word is always to be preferred over obeying it." How dangerous! As Miller concludes, "But unless the Word is set forth as incontrovertible, week by week, over a long time, opinion will at last win over commandment, and we who preach will be largely to blame for the loss." Miller, *Preaching*, 47.

preachers being no exception (Acts 20:19; Phil 2:3–4, 5–8).[160] There simply exists no place for any form of homiletical superciliousness in the interpreting and/or proclamation of Scripture. Therefore, emergents are right to criticize any form of preacher *ethos* that embodies a prideful, arrogant, know-it-all, infallible mentality.

However, as DeYoung and Kluck observe, there seems to be a "confusion of categories" for emergents when it comes to defining the role of humility.[161] Instead of understanding biblical humility as submission to God in Christ, modeled by obedience to His Word, they have shifted, equated, or redefined its meaning to that of uncertainty. Uncertainty is "the new truth" and the one "dogma" they will tolerate; "doubt and skepticism have been canonized as a form of humility," laments MacArthur in his defense against such homiletical incredulity.[162] To be considered a humble preacher in a postmodern world, for McLaren and Pagitt, seems to imply the necessary dismissal of any clarity, certainty, conviction, confidence, or understood authority in the message or call given to proclaim God's truth.[163]

McLaren, writing about necessary leadership traits for survival in an emerging culture, provides insight to this type of humble homiletical philosophy. Recommending a Dorothy of the Wizard of Oz mentality for leaders, he writes, "Rather than being a person with all the answers, who is constantly informed of what's up and what's what and where to go, she is herself lost, a seeker, vulnerable, often bewildered."[164] Another example of McLaren and Pagitt's over realized need to project an image of leadership void of answers, continually on journey, and never having fully arrived at the truth, and/or in no way appearing as the expert, can be

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[160] Jesus is the perfect model of biblical humility (Phil 2:5–8).

[161] DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 39.

[162] MacArthur, *Truth War*, 16.

[163] Compare the following discussion with how this mindset contrasts with some of John Piper's marks of biblical humility: 1. "Humility begins with a sense of subordination to God in Christ" (Matt 10:24; 1 Pet 5:6); 2. "Humility asserts truth not to bolster ego with control or with triumphs in debate, but as service to Christ and love to the adversary" (1 Cor 13:6; Matt 10:27–28; 2 Cor 4:5—"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake"); 3. "Humility knows it is dependent on grace for all knowing and believing" (1 Cor 4:7; Jas 1:21); and 4. "Humility knows it is fallible, and so considers criticism and learns from it; but also knows that God has made provision for human conviction and that he calls us to persuade others" (1 Cor 13:12; Prov 12:15; 2 Cor 5:11). See John Piper, "6 Aspects of Humility," *Desiring God Blog*, n.p. [cited 14 Mar. 2008]. Online: dgblog@desiringgod.org.

[164] McLaren and Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 158ff. Miller would seem to differ with McLaren on this point. His homiletical expertise and pastoral experience has led him to advise that churches want "the pastor to be a person of information." See Miller, *Preaching*, 31.

observed in their incessant use of disclaimers when speaking or writing.[165] To be humble the preacher must first engage in self-deprecation by dismissing any reason why the audience would want to listen to his message. Additionally, he must first patronize the audience by acknowledging their voice as being equally, or better yet, more valued than his, accompanied by the gesture that they should be speaking instead of him, or at least sharing the stage or microphone.[166]

Therefore preachers who reject denunciating themselves and their message, and who proclaim with clarity, certainty, and conviction, do so at the risk of being considered prideful, arrogant, controlling, uncompassionate, rigid, and legalistic.[167] Yet, does this not represent an unfair caricature and false assumption of biblical

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[165] See DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 42–43, for a run of identified examples where McLaren employs disclaimers in his writings. See Pagitt and Jones, "A New Theology for a New World," where Pagitt uses the following disclaimer: "I bluffed my way into writing a couple of books for them" referring to Zondervan. "I convinced the people over at Zondervan kind of like bluffing your way through a 'Texas Holdem' tournament." When speakers insist they have nothing more to offer than the listener, what incentive then does the listener have to listen? Both McLaren and Pagitt have referred to money-back guarantees in some of their books. E.g. see Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 117.

[166] This author has personally witnessed this to be a consistent pattern among emergent speakers including both McLaren and Pagitt. Apologizing for doing all the speaking when one has been assigned the task seems peculiar at best and potentially disingenuous at worst. This pattern seems so prevalent that it appears it is a prerequisite for emergents prior to doing any "speeching." The biblical pattern does not seem to offer such a model for public speaking or writing. The Bible does not record Paul apologizing before speaking to any given crowd nor does he apologize in advance to the recipients of his letters. Did Peter apologize or practice self-deprecation at Pentecost (Acts 2:14–39)? This emergent tactic may shed light on McLaren and Pagitt's lack of conviction or understanding about the call and role of the preacher. Isaiah for example was not assigned to apologetically facilitate the discussion of others but to proclaim the God given message to others (even if they would not listen)—there is a difference (Isa 6:8–10).

At the Deep Shift*: "Everything Must Change Tour" Personal notes,* n.p. Feb. 1–2, 2008, Charlotte, North Carolina, McLaren began a small group discussion about the emergent movement with this form of self-abasement. It seemed strange for him to belabor acknowledging those gathered—to hear him—that that they should be leading the discussion and/or his wife when the conference was all about his ideas, books, lectures, and vision for emergent Christians—as the lead voice in the emergent movement.

Sharing the microphone or using no microphone because of its projected power and status upon the speaker, which for Pagitt belittles the voice of the people, is another common claim and often shared opener for emergent speakers. The silliness of some of these emergent theological talking points was brought home to Pagitt by one of the members at Solomon's Porch who kept complaining about simply not being able to hear his messages because of his refusal to use a microphone. See Pagitt and Jones, "A New Theology for a New World," for a theological reason for their rejection of microphones, which ultimately boils down to despising authority be it the pastor's role or the Scriptures.

[167] MacArthur has observed this same emerging church mindset about uncertainty as a virtue. He writes, "Strong convictions plainly stated are invariably labeled 'arrogance' by those who favor postmodern dialogue." See MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 155. Wells states that "it is not immodest, nor arrogant, to claim that we know, when what we know is what God has given us to know through his Word." See Wells, *The Courage To Be Protestant*, 77-78.

preaching? Where does this erroneous schism between biblical humility and certainty in proclamation originate?[168] This false dichotomy stems from the emergent argument that preachers who proclaim knowable truth must do so from the vantage point of omniscience, an argument Carson refers to as the "wretched antithesis."[169] Since no preacher is omniscient, argues McLaren and Pagitt, to preach with certainty and clarity in the context of a postmodern culture is unwise. Preaching in such a manner, to them, represents a posture of arrogance, not humility.[170]

However, as Carson, Smith, MacArthur, and others point out, omniscience is not a prerequisite to knowing truth—absolute certainty is not required to proclaim truth about God with confidence and authority.[171] The authors of Scripture were certainly not all knowing (Deut 29:29; Rom 11:33), yet they did not write or preach with a spirit of uncertainty, conceit, or personal superiority. Rather, they wrote and proclaimed God's truth with a spirit of genuine, authentic humility combined with an authoritative confidence (and power—1 Thess 1:5) in knowing that which had been revealed to them and that which was to be proclaimed from them was sure and true (1 John 1:1–3).[172]

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[168] Is this emergent divide between humility and certainty a biblical teaching or rather a postmodern pious ploy that ultimately seeks to undermine the Bible's message and messengers who proclaim it with authority? Should hazy preaching be considered the litmus test for preaching that is humble?

[169] Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 192.

[170] See Smith, *Truth & The New Kind of Christian*, 107–40, for a helpful critique of McLaren's views about objective truth, epistemology, foundationalism, and humility. Smith believes in "modest foundationalism," which maintains foundational beliefs but without the need for absolute certainty as in the Cartesian understanding of foundationalism—"we need not have certainty in our beliefs in order to know that they are true" (119). His model proposes that "there is ample room for humility in our knowledge claims, and yet we still can grasp and know foundational truths about the real world" (118). He provides rebuttal to McLaren (and Tony Jones) for holding the church to a Cartesian model that begins with "indubitable beliefs" and then "other beliefs, with decreasing degrees of justification" (111). Believing in the Bible as inerrant or in the literal resurrection of Jesus, yet not holding to other Christian beliefs with the same level of justification, such as diverse views about eschatology, provides a biblical example of his "modest foundationalism" philosophy.

[171] See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 119 and 193–200; Smith, *Truth & The New Kind of Christian*, 120; and MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 183. MacArthur writes, "The emerging postmodernists have blurred the line between certainty and omniscience. They seem to presume that if we cannot know everything perfectly, we really cannot know anything with any degree of certainty" (22). Cf. Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 165–66; and/or DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 41. MacArthur notes on this subject that the doctrine of "illumination does not mean that everything about God can be known and understood. See John MacArthur, Jr., "The Spirit of God and Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (ed. Richard L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas; Dallas: Word, 1992), 103.

[172] Smith, *Truth & A New Kind Of Christian*, 120. Cf. Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 200. Paul understood his weaknesses and lack of complete knowledge or certainty of God's wisdom and mercy (Rom 11:33-36). Yet, as DeYoung and Kluck point out, "That did not stop the apostle from chiding

Paul, for example, did not employ in Athens a form of what Phil Johnson refers to as "postmodern-style charitableness" or "epistemic humility"—truth is relative, your opinion is as good as mine, and/or let's not harp on areas of indifference or hold firmly to any convictions, but rather seek to feel good about each others views by concentrating on areas of agreement or common ground (Acts 17:16–34).[173] Quite the contrary, instead of synthesizing their world view with his, he confronted their misguided belief system by proclaiming the message of the person and finished work of Jesus—including His resurrection, a sure point of dissention (1 Cor 1:18). Cowering before opposition was not an option for this chosen preacher.[174] His heralding, although marked by certainty, clarity and confrontation, was equally marked with biblical humility, a known pattern of his life and message (1 Cor 2:2-3).

Since the whole of Scripture assumes a believer can have a clear, confident and knowable understanding of God, it would seem that a humble approach to Scripture, especially for those who claim they love it and teach it, would reflect a submission to Scripture. One should listen to Carson's critique of the emerging church movement. He writes, "If the . . . conversation, wishes to remain faithful to Scripture, it must speak of truth and our ability to know it as sweepingly and confidently as Scripture does."[175] Furthermore, did not Jesus hold people accountable for knowing and understanding the Scriptures (Matt 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:26)?[176] It appears that neither McLaren nor Pagitt's preaching

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his fellow Jews for having a zeal for God "'not based on knowledge'" (Rom 10:2 NIV)." See DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 41. Paul knew mystery existed even within the truth God had revealed—"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" (1 Cor 2:16). Yet, as MacArthur points out, this did not stop him from declaring that believers "have the mind of Christ," meaning that Christ has passed on sufficient truth and understanding for us to know and proclaim Him (1 Cor 2:16; cf. 2:12). As MacArthur points out, "this should not be a complex issue." "Truth is what God decrees" and pastors are commissioned and commanded to proclaim it "in season and out of season—when it is well received and even when it is not (2 Tim 4:2)." See MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 183.

[173] Phil Johnson, "Paul and Charitableness," *PyroManicacs Blog*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2008]. Online: http://teampyro.blogspot.com/2008/04/paul-and-charitableness.html.

[174] Ibid. Johnson believes the Christian herald's responsibility is to "confront every worldview, every false religion, every superstitious belief, every human philosophy, and every skeptical opinion. It rises above all those things and speaks with unshakable authority, because the gospel is the truth of God, and the power of God for salvation."

[175] Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 193.

[176] These verses demonstrate Jesus using the phrase "Have you not read . . .?" as a way to provide what MacArthur refers to as a "common rebuke to those who challenged His teaching" yet failed to understand the Scriptures despite their clarity. The lack of clarity about Scripture was (and is) not the issue but rather impotent faith (Luke 24:25). Other verses that support God's expectation of

philosophy seems to hold such a conviction except when it fits their own personal agenda.[177]

The call to preach the truth in humility does not negate the reality that some pastors will preach with an air of pride, arrogance, condescension, and yes, maybe for some, an errant sense of infallibility and/or invincible certainty.[178] This is unfortunate and hurts the testimony of the church.[179] However, the solution is not to surrender preaching to postmodern thought, but rather submit preaching to Scripture and the Savior who modeled the perfect balance between certainty and humility in life and proclamation.[180] For McLaren and Pagitt to continue propagating the notion that ambiguity in the message somehow represents a mark of spirit-led humility seems more like leading an attack on the person of the Holy Spirit.[181] Additionally, it appears to represent an active disbelief in God's ability to communicate with clarity, call preachers with certainty, and empower heralds to proclaim eternal truth with this same conviction (John 16:13; Acts 1:8).[182] It is true, "The act of preaching would smack of unmitigated arrogance and overreaching were it not for the fact that it is God Himself who has given us the task," as Mohler claims.[183] Yet, in light of this truth, preaching then "is not an act of arrogance but rather of humility,"[184] humility not cloaked in uncertainty—that is unbelief—but in the confidence of God breathed Scripture (2 Tim 3:16).

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man to obey His truths include Rom 2:8–9; Gal 5:7; and Rev 21:8. MacArthur notes that Jesus' clarity of teaching is what ultimately drove people away. Jesus, he writes, "Made the truth starkly clear." See MacArthur, *Truth War*, 71.

[177] E.g. McLaren and Pagitt are sure of their purported views of the gospel. Carson critiques McLaren on this point in making the following observation: "After the condescending dismissals of all the 'gospels' he doesn't like, he offers us, at the end of the day, his own understanding of the gospel. He cannot avoid it; that is why he keeps writing books." See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 165.

[178] Smith, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian*, 119.

[179] Stott writes on the danger of the preacher's pride, "Pride is without doubt the chief occupational hazard of the preacher. It has ruined many, and deprived their ministry of power." See Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 320. Cf. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 13ff.

[180] Smith, *Truth & The New Kind Of Christian*, 120. McLaren and Pagitt's gamesmanship with the Word reflects a lack of biblical humility—for humility begins with submission to the Word. Stott's counsel on humility is fitting here, "We need the humility to submit to the Word of God. That is, we must resist the temptation to avoid the unfashionable truths of Scripture and to ventilate our own more trendy opinions instead" (Prov 18:2). See Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 321.

[181] DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 40.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 42.

[184] Ibid.

Is it not presumptuous, or at least unwise, of McLaren and Pagitt to redefine the Lord's command to proclaim Scripture with clarity, boldness, and humility to nothing more than an uncertain, ever evolving philosophical discussion of social religious ideas, cloaked in Jesus rhetoric, where the voices of perspectivalism within the community of faith reigns as authoritative over the very Word of God?[185] This does not speak of biblical humility, rather it speaks of biblical haughtiness or what Carson might refer to as "oxymoronic humble arrogance (or is it arrogant humility?)," which can lead to biblical heresy that undermines truth leading genuine believers astray and non-believers into further deception.[186] If Scripture consists of truth (John 17:17), and preachers are to preach Scripture (2 Tim 4:2), then preachers are to proclaim truth, not with uncertainty or ambiguity, but with humble perspicuity (1 Cor 2:1–5).[187]

Preaching as One without Authority

McLaren and Pagitt's philosophy of preaching reflects an uneasiness and/or disdain for preaching as a herald and as one with authority. Yet, preaching, by definition, means to herald truth as one with authority (1 Cor 1:21, 23; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). Certainly, there is more to the role of preaching than just the task of heralding, as Stott's work on the biblical portrait of the preacher uncovers.[188] Yet this metaphor is identified as "chief" among the descriptive terms that defines biblical preaching.[189] Therefore, should it not be given utmost attention?

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[185] Carson defines perspectivalism as "the view that all claims to truth are finally no more than different perspectives." See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 75.

[186] Ibid.

[187] The doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture does not mean that all of Scripture is equally clear for "some things are hard to understand" (2 Pet 3:16). However, it does mean that God has spoken with enough distinction for people to know and understand basic truths needed to have saving knowledge of Christ. See MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 157. The apostle Paul's humble perspicuity was grounded in God, Christ, the cross, and the person of the Holy Spirit who he relied on to empower him to preach and to know for certain those "things" given to him were from God (1 Cor 2:12).

[188] In this work Stott unpacks the biblical evidence for five metaphors used to describe the role of the preacher—steward, herald, witness, father, and servant. See Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, 11-124.

[189] Ibid., 33.

The herald, states Stott, is one "charged with the solemn yet exciting responsibility of proclaiming the good news of God."[190] He is one who knows that his task is not a mere exposition of words, but a divine proclamation of "God's supernatural intervention, supremely in the death and resurrection of His Son, for the salvation of mankind."[191] To herald means not to merely lecture about objective truths addressed to the mind or "impart information and perhaps to evoke the student to further enquiry," or in the case of McLaren and Pagitt to provide an opportunity to dialogue about their pluralistic and/or socialistic version of the kingdom of God.[192] To herald means to follow in the footsteps of John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter who called people to repent and receive forgiveness of sins by surrendering unto Jesus as Lord (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:2–4; Acts 2:38). It means to follow the lead of Jesus who taught in the synagogues and heralded the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:15).[193] For the apostle Paul, to herald meant to preach and plead as if God were speaking through him, calling people to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20). To herald means to proclaim a message that is "dogmatic because it is divine."[194]

Stott deliberately establishes a serious tone around the preacher's role as herald, as does Scripture. Heralding is simply not a time for discussion but proclamation, and the message being proclaimed is to center on Christ (Col 1:28). As Stott remarks, "There is too much discussion of the Christian religion today, particularly with unbelievers, as if we were more concerned with men's opinions of Christ than with the honour and glory of Jesus Christ Himself."[195] Preachers, no matter the era or historical setting in which they have been, are, or will be called, have always and will always have the same task: to "proclaim Christ, not to discuss

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[190] Ibid. The content of the apostolic *kerygma* according to Mounce provides a focused narrative and propositional declaration around the person and finished work of Jesus on the cross as fulfillment of divine prophecy, which leads to a clear summons to repent and receive forgiveness of sins. See Robert Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 42–43, 61, 64, 77, 84, 88, and 110.

[191] Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, 34.

[192] Ibid., 42.

[193] Ibid., 37. A central component of Jesus' kingdom of God message is the demand to repent (Matt 4:17; Matt 12:41; Luke 5:32; 13:3, 5). See Piper, *What Jesus Demands*, 40ff.

[194] Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, 110.

[195] Ibid.

Him."[196] The task and call will coincide with the understanding that "to preach the gospel is to preach Christ, for Christ is the gospel (Acts 8:5; Phil 1:15)."[197] Thus, heralding will always have two dimensions, both proclamation and appeal. People may listen, respond and repent, or they may close their ears, ridicule, and attack (Acts 17:32–34). Outcome aside, the herald, in order to be faithful to God's call, must carry out his charge to shout from the rooftops (Matt 10:27) the message that did not originate from himself but with Him who gave the Word to be faithfully declared without any deconstruction, reconstruction, and/or re-imagining.[198]

To dismiss preaching as heralding might appear as a humble and appropriate act of concession to a postmodern culture that seemingly bristles at absolute truth and authoritative proclamation—it would certainly welcome the praise of many emergents.[199] Why not discard this particular preaching model and go with Pagitt's charge to dialogue the Word instead of heralding it, and/or converse with McLaren's list of preaching types? Granted, at times the preacher may well be the listener, dancer, quest inspirer, seeker, and facilitator.[200] And besides, who wants to hold to heralding, which by definition requires preaching the "cringe factor"?[201] Why not lessen this biblical tension and cultural opposition by reducing any notion of preaching with authority. Rather than traveling down the same homiletical road of homileticians who have acknowledged and preached with scriptural

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[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid., 40.

[198] Ibid., 111.

[199] See Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 29–34, for a discussion on postmodern rejection of objective truth and authority.

[200] See McLaren and Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, 160ff, for a listing of these descriptive terms. Cf. DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 159–60.

[201] Hebrews 10:31 where it states, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," provides an example of the "cringe factor" in preaching. Mohler sees this reality missing in contemporary evangelical worship. See Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 32. See Piper, "Joy and the Supremacy of Christ," 75–76, for a pointed discussion of postmodern/emergent preachers who are unwilling to proclaim core aspects of the gospel message, such as God's wrath. Piper writes, "The postmodern mind, inside and outside of the church, has no place for the biblical truth of the wrath of God. And therefore it has no place for a wrath-bearing Savior who endures God's curse that we might go free." A proper understanding of God's wrath leads to a blessed understanding of true biblical joy. Whittmer warns that when men like McLaren and Pagitt, whom he refers to as "postmodern innovators," "avoid proclaiming the scandalous aspects of the gospel" and "conceal its offensive parts," they may well "become popular, but they will cease to be Christian." See Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 179.

authority, which has led to many a herald's suffering and death,[202] why not choose a gentler, more generous approach to preaching by surrendering authority to the listener and welcoming everyone's voice to the homiletical table?[203] Is this the right road to travel—the postmodern road?

Here stands Pagitt's contrarian counsel, "The dialogical approach means that the authority of teaching and explanation needs to be decentralized away from me as the pastor both in the 'pulpit' and during the week."[204] Sharing the burden of homiletical authority may have warrant if speaking of the biblical model of shared leadership—elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).[205] However, no precedent appears in Scripture to ditch the burden in order to appease postmodern or personal sensibilities—no matter how "refreshing" it may be when viewed as "just one of the voices" within the church.[206] Luther may well have liked to have remained as just one of the voices, yet the burden given with his call to herald truth compelled him to despise appeasing the cultural/church establishment of his day and thus declaring, at the potential cost of

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[202] Pagitt stated that "I'm not willing to die for someone's craziness" in reference to the threat of martyrdom that could come as a result of preaching. See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church," Panel Speakers: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Doug Pagitt, and Karen Ward, n.p. *Personal notes*, June 1–2, 2007, Seattle, Washington. Does Pagitt's unwillingness to die for his message say something about the conviction he holds about his message? Does Pagitt's conviction reflect the way or teachings of Jesus (Matt 5:11–12; 10:27–28) or Paul (2 Cor 11: 23–28)?

[203] David Allen's words here are extensive yet valuable in light of Pagitt's rejection of the old path (Jer 6:16) for a postmodern one. He states, writing on biblical authority, that "indeed there is—Jeremiah's 'old path' (Jeremiah 6:16); a road nowadays less traveled, but once traveled by many . . . time would fail me to tell of the many who once traveled that road; of Paul, Peter, and John; of Chrysostom and Augustine; of Wycliffe, Savanarola, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Whitfield, Knox, Jasper, Moody, Spurgeon, and King, to name only a few, who through preaching subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of critics, and launched reformations. Some were beheaded, others were crucified upside down, or exiled. . . . Some were burned at the stake for their preaching, others languished in prisons, though the word of God which they preached was not bound. . . . These all died preaching—either with tongue or pen or life. Therefore, seeing we are surrounded by a great cloud of preachers, and laying aside every inadequate view of language and any homiletical approach that does not properly acknowledge Scriptural authority, let us preach the word, having our eyes fixed on Jesus the Logos of God, who indeed, according to Hebrews 1:1-2, is God's final revelation." See David L. Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority," *JETS* 43 (Sep. 2000), n.p. [cited 13 Sept 2005]. Online: http://www.etsjets.org./files/Jets-PDFs/43/43-3/43-3-p489_515_JETS.pdf.

[204] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 130.

[205] See Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (3d ed.; Littleton: Lewis and Roth, 1995).

[206] Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined*, 130. Pastors can be one with the people but they are also called to set the pace for the people by living above reproach (Titus 1:6), instructing the people in sound doctrine and rebuking those who go astray (Titus 1:9), and in all areas of life, model good works (Titus 2:7). Additionally, they are to stir up the gift of preaching (2 Tim 1:6), lead by power not by timidity (2 Tim 1:7), and "convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). See DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 160. Oddly, Pagitt refuses to be the pace setter for such a biblical task. See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 79.

his life, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise"—for the sake of the gospel and the church.[207]

It would be a mistake to fuse biblical preaching with postmodern sensibilities. McLaren and Pagitt, by prioritizing the aforementioned homiletical roles over the preacher as herald, appear to have made such a decision. When such choices lead to a compromising of the message, which is to make great of God by heralding His Son—Jesus, the heart and soul of the herald's message (Gal 6:14; 2 Cor 4:5), then Piper's counsel, "You should never preach," might be warranted, despite the risk of sounding harsh to postmoderns.[208]

For McLaren and Pagitt, the preacher as herald has been replaced by a homiletical philosophy that honors the preacher as facilitator who leads conversations about God. Messengers are out; conversants are in. This homiletical philosophy reflects a dismissal of God's *authority* in His word, a demise of the preacher's *authority* to preach His Word, and ultimately the people's refusal to live under the *authority* of His Word, which rejects the model of genuine humility expressed in Scripture and in the life of the Savior (John 5:19).[209] Just what methods these two conversants use to deliver their messages, as emergents without authority, will now become the final focus of this critique and chapter.

Methodology

Methodology matters; it is not neutral.[210] A preacher's method (style/form) of communication will either support his preaching

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[207] Martin Luther, quoted in Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 717.

[208] Such counsel was extended to Tony Jones (and possibly implied to Pagitt as well) by John Piper. See Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 77. Pagitt, who baulks at the notion that God speaks through preachers during the preaching event, would likely fall under the counsel of Mohler when he states, "If you are not confident that God speaks as you rightly read and explain the Word of God, then you should quit." See Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 57.

[209] See Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 70–71, for a discussion of the critical importance of authority in preaching. Mohler writes, "Because the preacher dares to speak on behalf of God. . . . No one should even contemplate such an endeavor without absolute confidence in a divine call to preach and in the unblemished authority of the Scriptures" (71).

[210] In the field of human communication, Marshall McLuhan is known for highlighting the importance of the medium of the message—"The medium is the message." Put simply, the medium or form of communication sends a message along with the content of the message itself. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 7. Azurdia states that the "message

theology and philosophy or undermine it—it is determinate of the other parts, not mutually exclusive from them.[211] For McLaren and Pagitt there appears to be no disparity or inconsistency between these three homiletical elements. Their chosen methods of packaging and delivering messages, which can be captured in two essential forms—narrative and dialogue—is both consistent with their revealed preaching ideology and seemingly the best choice to express their preaching theology. Since preaching as dialogue has already been addressed, and in some ways presents similar characteristics as narrative proclamation, this closing discussion will focus solely on preaching as story.

Preaching as Story

Preaching as story and/or narrative preaching is not indigenous to the emerging church movement. Preachers of past generations have been known for their narrative proclamation and/or story telling instruction.[212] However, within the past thirty years a particular (new) form of narrative method has taken on a revival-like interest among many contemporary homileticians with its popularity rising to the level of name designation—"The New Homiletic."[213] Calvin Miller defines this new narrative form as a sermon that "rather than

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and method must be harmonious. When they are not, it is the integrity of the message that suffers." See Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 82.

[211] McLaren is certainly aware of how his choice of medium supports his changing message. He writes, "It has been fashionable among the innovative [emerging pastors] I know to say, 'We're not changing the message; we're only changing the medium.' This claim is probably less than honest . . . in the new church we must realize how medium and message are intertwined. When we change the medium, the message that is received is changed, however subtly, as well. We might as well get beyond our naiveté or denial about this." See McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, 68.

[212] Donald Hamilton, *Homiletical Handbook* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 104. Cf. David L. Larsen, *Telling the Old Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 14.

[213] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 149-50. Significant players and works associated with this new narrative movement include: Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958); Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching* (2d ed.; Enid: Phillips University Press, 1978); Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal, and Charles Rice, *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); Richard Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987); Ralph L. Lewis and Greg Lewis, *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen* (Westchester: Crossway, 1983); and Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Atlanta: Knox, 1980).

Goldsworthy's review of this narrative phenomenon might well provide at least one central reason behind its popularity. He writes, "At a common-sense level it may be argued that if God has seen fit to communicate his ways to us in narrative, should we submerge this narrative in our sermon form so that it comes out as a series of five abstract conceptual points all beginning with the letter P?" See Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 150. McLaren and Pagitt would most likely applaud Goldsworthy's analysis.

containing stories, is a story which, from outset to conclusion, binds the entire sermon to a single plot as theme."[214] McLaren's work, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, along with his "abductive narrative" style, might well resemble some of the attributes of this recently emerged narrative phenomenon. Whether or not he has drawn any influence from the proponents of the New Homiletic for this writing or his preaching methodology is uncertain. However, what is clear about this particular work, which he claims is his best attempt (model for preaching)[215] at getting to the big picture of the narrative story—as a means of reframing the message of Jesus—is that it holds in common many similarities identified with the works of this new team of narrative advocates.[216]

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[214] Calvin Miller, "Narrative Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (ed. Michael Duduit; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 103. Miller states that this form differs from sermons that use "stories and illustrations to make the sermon interesting, instructive, or challenging."

[215] See chapter 4, footnote 118.

[216] The following anthology of statements has been drawn from the works of two prominent homileticians associated with the New Homiletic. These statements provide but a sample of evidence that seems to demonstrate a close correlation between not only the preaching methods of McLaren, Pagitt, and the New Homiletic, but also their supportive preaching theology and philosophy. Reading these statements in conjunction with McLaren and Pagitt's respective chapters (4 and 5) should reveal to the reader their like-mindedness—whether intentional or not.

Fred B. Craddock, credited by some as the founder of the new homiletic (see Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads") makes these following statements: "No longer can the preacher presuppose the general recognition of his authority as a clergyman, or the authority of his institution, or the authority of Scripture" (14); "Expository or biblical preaching has been found guilty of archaism, sacrificing the present to the past" (18); "Scriptures can be read in the service for mood or atmosphere or to satisfy those who feel it should be included, but this should not be allowed to shackle the minister" (18); "Preaching increases in power when it is dialogical, when the speaker and listener share in the proclamation of the Word" (19); the audience must be given a voice or sermons will become "museum pieces" (15); Preaching must be conversation not messages of "logical development, clear argument, thorough and conclusive treatment" such as given in "written messages" (30); Narrative/inductive messages are more "descriptive than hortatory, more marked by the affirmative than imperative" (58); Inductive preaching allows the listener to come to their own conclusion with the text—"A work of art does not exist totally of itself but is completed by the viewer" (65); Dealing with the text involves "continuing interpretation and reinterpretation" based on the changing needs of the audience (121); "Belonging to the historic church also means participating in and witnessing to God's continuing activity and revelation rather than locating the time of God in the distant past or future" (127); "The Word of God, if it is to be located, is to be located in movement, in conversation, in communication between Scripture and Church" (133); The goal of sermon movement "is to engage the hearer in the pursuit of an issue or an idea so that he will think his *own thoughts* and experience his *own feelings* in the presence of Christ and in light of the gospel" (157, emphasis added). See Craddock, *One Without Authority*.

David Buttrick makes the following statements in *A Captive Voice*: "What the Bible offers is narrative with an elaborate mythic beginning-creation and fall, Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the tower of Babel" (17); The concept that the Bible is the Word of God is a "groundless notion of Biblical authority" (30); "Neither Scripture nor preaching is word of God per se. The Bible can be God's word because it can speak redemptively. Otherwise the Bible is no more than a distinguished literary compendium" (31); "Christian preaching must play on the 'edges of language' where metaphor brings out redefinitions of human experience" (66–67); "There is no pure gospel; no not even in the Bible. To be blunt, the Christian Scriptures are both sexist and anti-Semitic" (75); "[We] are starting to realize that the gospel is bigger than something called personal salvation. . . . Clearly the Christian

In addition to showing homiletical similarities among supporters of the New Homiletic, McLaren, as well as Pagitt, both incorporate what might be deemed as life situation stories. These narrative vignettes or real life illustrations serve as a means of communicating the Bible's story and/or aiding in the creating and sharing of their own story as a part of a larger community of faith.[217] Whether they choose a narrative method that incorporates characteristics of the New Homiletic or a more traditional form of story-telling, it comes as no surprise that both men have chosen a style that is, according to Carson, "intrinsically more hermeneutically 'open' than discourse. . . ."[218] This push for narrative over discourse, from two emergent preachers who openly despise an Aristotelian, rational, linear, deductive, propositional form of proclamation, could signal more than just a shift of cultural communication preferences (modern to postmodern); it might rather provide a tip toward their desire to move away from authoritative proclamation of biblical truth.[219]

Associating narrative preaching with a rejection of biblical truth or a low view of Scripture need not always be the case, for

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Scriptures see Christ as a cosmic savior; he doesn't just merely save souls, a Gnostic heresy at best: he saves the entire human enterprise, indeed, the universe" (108); and finally, "Insurance policy preaching, urging people to come find Jesus and ensure an eternal future, isn't Christian at all; it is merely an appeal to narrow self-interest" (109). See David Buttrick, *A Captive Voice: The Liberation of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994). See Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads," for a compilation of these quotes. See also David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 41, for the following statement: "We have deliberately bypassed the rationalistic definitions of preaching found in didactic homiletics. Preachers do not explicate teachings, they explore symbols. Faith does have content, but not a content that can be spelled out in propositional statements of instruction."

[217] This would be more in line with a "reader response" approach to the text, which places the meaning of the text in the hands of the reader/community of faith. See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?"* 27–29, for a more complete definition of reader response theory and a comprehensive discussion and biblical solution to contemporary hermeneutical issues (entire work).

Brian Chapell argues for the utilization of this type of story-telling or use of illustrations in preaching. However the key difference would be his integration of life situations with solid exegesis of the Scripture and the use of biblical propositions. The aim of using this type of communication method is to remove truth "from the ethereal world of abstract dogma" where "Scripture becomes real, accessible, and meaningful because its message gets rooted in real life." McLaren and Pagitt might well agree with Chapell's aim, however their sermons connect more with his warnings. Chapell states that this type of preaching is typically "weak on exposition of the Bible" and "the sermon revolves around the life situation, and whatever is said about the Scriptures is often tangential to the message rather than its central core." See Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 30–31.

[218] Carson, "Challenges for the Twenty-First-Century Pulpit," 185.

[219] Ibid. Carson states that if the current focus on narrative preaching "merely tips us from one cultural preference (viz., discourse) to another (viz., narrative), we have not gained anything. . . . How much better to remain faithful to biblical truth yet simultaneously focused on Scripture's existential bite."

McLaren, Pagitt, or any homiletician.[220] Certainly benefits await preachers and listeners when narrative methodology is employed in a way that honors the text and its ultimate author—God.[221] Yet, as with any methodology, problems arise when a particular form is pushed to an extreme or held captive by theological presuppositions wed to culture, not Christ and His Word.[222] An overview of both possibilities warrants further discussion in light of McLaren and Pagitt's narrative methodological sway.

Advantages to narrative methodology are plentiful. Sidney Greidanus describes four such benefits in his work *The Modern Preacher And the Ancient Text*.[223] First, using a narrative sermon form for a narrative text highlights and honors the form given by the Scripture and provides a lessened chance of distorting the text's meaning. Second, narrative sermon form more naturally draws in the interest of the listener. Third, this method engages the listener holistically, "To live into the message with their imagination rather than merely to reflect on it intellectually."[224] And finally, the sermon narrative form communicates implicitly and obliquely rather than explicitly and directly, which "addresses the whole person" and gets "around defenses" that break down communication "where the

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[220] This does not need to be the case, but unfortunately it does seem to be the clear foundational presupposition for many proponents of the New Homiletic. See Allen, "A Tale Of Two Roads." Mike Abendroth highlights one example involving David Buttrick. He writes, "After 457 pages of his book intended to teach people to preach, [he] said, 'So, let us be willing to say baldly that it is possible to preach the Word of God without so much as mentioning scripture. . . . If Scripture should become the law of preaching, then preaching will no longer be the Word of God.'" See Abendroth, *Jesus Christ: The Prince of Preachers*, 47; and Buttrick, *Homiletic Moves*, 458. Buttrick's statement resembles a breakout session led by Pagitt at the "National Conference on Preaching" sponsored by *Preaching*, April 24–26, 2006, in Dallas Texas. Pagitt's session on preaching provided no insight from Scripture on the subject but rather turned to *National Public Radio* and Bruce Springsteen clips for homiletical counsel—or at least conversation.

[221] See Miller, "Narrative Preaching," 104–6, for a list of narrative benefits. Cf. Hamilton, *Homiletical Handbook*, 107–8; and J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 295.

[222] Miller comments that "generally practicing only one form of any medium is in a sense extreme." See Miller, "Narrative Preaching," 111. See Chapell, *Preach with Power*, 177–92, for a discussion/warning of the hermeneutical origins that has led to the implementation of the "canonization of vicarious experience as the primary form of homiletical communication" (178). He argues for the proper balance of both narrative and propositional proclamation. "The truth in Scripture comes packaged in both propositions and narratives, suggesting that a theory that minimizes the importance of either is insufficient for communicating the Bible's message," writes Chapell. Thus an "either/or choice between narratives and propositions" is unwarranted (190).

[223] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 151–52.

[224] Ibid., 151.

didactic form would fail."[225] These benefits, argues Greidanus, make narrative methodology a viable option for biblical proclamation but only if "the biblical story remains the foundation of the sermon" and a clear, undeniable central theme or point of the biblical story is transferred to the listener.[226] In other words, simply telling the story is not biblical preaching.[227]

Therein lies the homiletical concern evidenced in McLaren and Pagitt's narrative preaching. In order to stay true to the biblical text, "the exegete," advises Kaiser, "must first come to terms with the biblical author."[228] Liefeld might refer to this as "hermeneutical integrity" where the exegete submits to the original meaning of the text, the movement and direction intended for the original audience, and the proper application of the truth.[229] This view contrasts with McLaren's *philogian* or Pagitt's *contrarian* postmodern approach to Scripture where authorial intent is not the central aim of interpretation nor is the authority of the Word the driving force of sermonic conviction.[230]

In their approach the narrative sermon has the freedom to use the text, not serve it.[231] This means that a narrative method can be creatively employed to help a postmodern story-soaked culture get the sense of, share in, relate to, imagine, and most importantly *experience* the biblical story and/or the story in which they find themselves, yet with no allegiance to a definitive (authoritative) biblical plot, principle, or precept derived directly from the text.[232]

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[225] Ibid., 152. Chapell states, "If preachers never uncover the stories that communicate in the way we all live and learn, there is danger that religious professionals will more and more become the guardians of a linguistic orthodoxy to which all assent, but which few understand, and fewer live." Chapell, *Preach with Power*, 201.

[226] Ibid., 149. Narrative and proposition exist together in Scripture. Miller's comments are helpful at this juncture: "I have yet to be convinced that story obliterates precept. In the Scriptures, story and precept come bound together." See Calvin Miller, *Spirit, Word, and Story* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 150.

[227] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 149. Cf. Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 50, where he states, "Preaching is not the task of saying something interesting about God, nor is it delivering a religious discourse or narrating story."

[228] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 210.

[229] Walter Liefeld, *From Text to Sermon: New Testament Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 6.

[230] McLaren and Pagitt's narrative/life story methodology and message is a direct reflection of their preaching theology and philosophy.

[231] Liefeld, *From Text to Sermon*, 6.

[232] Allen notes the shift from propositional homiletics to the new "fundamental axiom" of the New Homiletic, where meaning is derived in the experience between preacher and congregation and "imagination" rules over "reason." "It is the privileging of individual experience of narrative and imagination over rational discourse that is the essence of the New Homiletic"—all which sounds very McLarenian and Pagittian. See Allen, "The Tale of Two Roads." Cf. Hamilton, *Homiletical Handbook*,

Whether the biblical story preached is even considered authoritatively true may be of minimal concern since truth ultimately resides with the autonomous self and/or community of faith, not the Word of God.[233]

Kaiser's homiletical counsel for narrative preaching warns against the use of story that communicates an earthy message held captive by existential philosophy and cultural relativism instead of divine truth. He writes,

> Liberal and neo-orthodox methods successfully avoid deadening effects of a dry, antique, purely descriptive recital of facts. But such methods have thereby also forfeited the right to claim any divine authority for their message since the tradition or preached word is of man's own making and not another revelation equal to Scripture. If it is man who has made his message "relevant" apart from what God meant, man must also vouch for its authenticity as a divine perspective—all of which is an impossible feat.[234]

Pagitt's postmodern sermonic direction would not be phased the slightest by such a homiletical warning. Likewise McLaren seems to have no interest in standing for the text over and above the postmodern community and/or his personal social agenda—quite the contrary. Rather than implement a narrative sermon form derived from a traditional hermeneutical inquiry[235] and in submission to an orthodox understanding of Scripture and biblical theology, they have chosen the road of the New Hermeneutic[236] or

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116, where he states on this subject, "Objective meaning has given way to subjective search for meaningful experience."

[233] This ideology can be traced to men such as Barth, Ricoeur, and Craddock. When discursive reasoning is "subordinated to narrative, symbol, metaphor, and the like" writes Allen, "the questions of truth and historicity" become "secondary to the experience evoked by the srmon which is grounded in narrative and symbolist approach to preaching"—which sounds McLarian and Pagittian. See Allen, "The Tale of Two Roads."

[234] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 203.

[235] "Historical orthodoxy tends to center meaning in authorial intent and textual exegesis. Modern trends move the locus of meaning more toward reader and universe dynamics," writes Chapell. See Chapell, *Preach with Power*, 180. McLaren and Pagitt move meaning to community in honor of the postmodern context.

[236] See Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 17–36, for a contemporary summary of the crisis in hermeneutics, including Hans Georg Gadamer's influence upon "The New Hermeneutic." Gadamer's belief that the text has inherent meaning beyond both the author and the interpreter such

a new emerging path—one that appears to model the weaknesses and theological underpinnings of the New Homiletic instead of its potential advantages.[237]

Pitfalls of this kind of narrative methodology are plentiful. Greidanus warns of five possibilities, three of which are applicable to this discussion.[238] First, narrative need not become the *sine qua non* for all preaching. McLaren and Pagitt's insistence for this approach coupled with their postmodern subversive authoritarian mindset might be surprised to read the following instruction by a pioneer of non-authoritarian preaching. Fred Craddock warns that narrative should never

> replace rational argument in Christian discourse. Rational argument serves to keep the communication self-critical, athletically trim, and free of sloppy sentimentality that can take over in the absence of critical activity. We need always to be warned against the use of narratives and stories to avoid the issues of doctrine, history, and theological reflection.[239]

Granted, McLaren and Pagitt might not implement narrative at the complete expense of any other form of communication, yet their story based dialogical method of communicating does seem to reflect Craddock's concern. Is it not possible to maintain a generous homiletical friendship with narrative that does not neglect showing the love for discourse passages of Scripture, propositional truth,

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that the "true sense is an unending process which is never exhausted or captured by an infinite line of interpreters (30)!" sounds of the same tune as McLaren and Pagitt's postmodern hermeneutic.

[237] The central or most controversial theological element of the New Homiletic stems from the assertion that the design of the narrative sermon seeks to facilitate an existential journey through story where truth is discovered and/or created as the message interplays with the life situations of the audience. This discovery of a greater understanding of self through personal interaction and interpretation of the story as the Word is preached essentially then becomes the Word of God. This form of narrative proclamation, where truth is for the listener to decide based on his own life experiences, contrast sharply with what might be deemed as an expositional approach where propositional truth is derived directly from the text and then applied to the listener.

For an excellent historical insight to the various influencers behind the New Homiletic, see Allen, "A Tale Of Two Roads." Allen makes a convincing argument that the New Homiletic is a product of narrative theology and the narrative hermeneutic. He writes, "Like its father, narrative theology, and its mother, narrative hermeneutics, narrative homiletics maintains a strong family resemblance. . . . There can be little doubt that narrative theology and narrative hermeneutics function as the foundation for narrative homiletics." These hermeneutical/homiletical movements have led to a demise of a high view of Scripture and thus biblical authority.

[238] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 152–54.

[239] Fred B. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 135.

deductive reasoning, discursive preaching, doctrine and/or an accurate historical reflection of the gospel, church, and its proclaimed message and methods used for preaching down through the centuries?[240]

Imposing a pure deductive form upon all texts, a homiletical tactic both men are sure to despise, is still not as grave an offense as imposing the narrative upon all texts.[241] This holds true especially when the proper distillation of the central theme of the text and/or central idea of the text (CIT), big idea, exegetical idea, central thrust, essence of a text in a sentence (ETS), or dominating theme, from the chosen periscope, is not mined and proclaimed as a means of avoiding submission to the authority of the Word.[242] Narrative (inductive) form versus deductive form may provide lively homiletical debate; yet if preaching is to be true Christian preaching, the ultimate aim involving some aspect of didactic instruction cannot be excluded. Hershael York is right; everything hinges upon the meaning of the text, and "no matter how great a communicator one may be" (new or old homiletic forms), "if the content of the sermon is not congruent with the Word of God, it cannot achieve anything of eternal value."[243] What then is needed and modeled in Scripture is a balance between narrative and propositional discourse—both utilized with defined didactive intent. An extended excursus of Chapell's narrative wisdom may well prove pertinent at this juncture:

> The Bible, though it contains a great deal of narrative, remains rich in propositional content. In fact, the genius of Scripture as it pertains to transferable meaning is that it

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[240] Pastor Dale Van Dyke, in referring to his angst against some of the loose interpretation of Scripture and church history by some in the emerging church movement, states, "'It's pure historical ignorance . . . or arrogance. It's as though the church for the last two thousand years hasn't had a clue what they're doing, and now . . . we can start doing church." Quote taken from DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent*, 219.

[241] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 152. "The narrative form cannot be used successfully with every type of text; if the imposition of the didactic from on all texts leads to the distortion of some texts, so also the imposition of the narrative form on all texts would lead to distortion." McLaren and Pagitt seem to limit their use of non-narrative texts even to the point of creating what might be considered a new "homiletical canon." See Eslinger's critique of New Homiletic preachers who have done the same thing. Eslinger, *A New Hearing*, 29, 55, respectively.

[242] See Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 128–29, for a reference list for some of these various ways to describe the central idea of the text.

[243] Hershael York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Proposition* (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 77.

> weds narrative and propositional forms to lock down meanings across time and across individual and cultural differences. In the Bible, narratives provide experiential reference for the meaning of propositions, even as the propositions provide conceptual and linguistic backgrounds for the narratives that give their shapes meaning. The narratives would have no personally transcendent meaning without the propositions, and the propositions would have no personally transferable meaning without the experiential accounts that provide vicarious interaction with Scripture's truths. By providing narratives along with propositions the Bible asserts the value of both, and makes suspect any communication system that would deny the value of either.[244]

Therefore, McLaren's push for preaching like Jesus, who spoke in the language of images, metaphors, and story, has its place, if sufficient propositional teaching is provided to proclaim the point of the story. If Jesus is to be the model of divine proclamation, it would then seem fitting to acknowledge and represent both teaching through story-telling and propositional discourse. After all, notes Miller, "Jesus did sometimes preach in the blistering rhetoric of the prophets" (Luke 11:39-44).[245] To refrain from direct discourse in order to appease the "postmodern palate with its distaste for propositions" may well provide a communication technique that satisfies the need for "vicarious experience," yet, as Chapell warns, this approach will "remain restricted" in its "ability to communicate universal, absolute, or authoritative truth."[246] In other words, if McLaren and Pagitt continue in their disdain for, and/or outright refusal to submit their preaching to, the propositional elements of Scripture, then their preaching will continue to remain impotent to herald the divine gospel while revealing the liberal/neo-orthodox/narrative theology/New Hermeneutic and/or New Homiletic underpinnings behind their chosen homiletical method(s).

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[244] Chapell, *Preaching with Power*, 187.
[245] Miller, "Narrative Preaching," 112.
[246] Chapell, *Preaching with Power*, 186.

Second, the indirect and/or inductive nature of the narrative methodology can be just as much a hindrance to clear biblical proclamation as it can be a benefit. Mohler highlights this point by arguing that the "demand for story" blunts the "declarative force of Scripture," while others make the opposite homiletical claim.[247] Henry Davis warns against becoming too preachy—"direct and explicit statement"—with narrative, for it "quickly destroys the inherent force of the narrative."[248] Story speaks by suggestion, argues Davis, and therefore application of the biblical truth can only be employed by "hints and suggestive touches" in order to not "spoil the effect" of the message.[249] This sounds intrinsically familiar to McLaren's methodological aim to compose homiletical experiences, not proclaim sermon points or biblical principles. Holistic sermonic experiences that engage both the intellect and the emotions for the purpose of teaching biblical truth should be valued. Yet the risk with this method, as identified by Greidanus, resides in the potential for divergent audience interpretations.[250] When the listener is left to implicate himself with his own conclusions, writing and telling his own story alongside the biblical story, it becomes anyone's guess as to how the story will be interpreted and lived out as part of a community of faith.[251]

This downside of oblique communication doubles in danger when combined with McLaren and Pagitt's preaching affinity for mystery, ambiguity, religious pluralism, and conversational theology.

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[247] Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 50.

[248] Davis, *Design for Preaching*, 161. Some credit Davis as being instrumental in providing the initial movement or shift away from the deductive/propositional model of preaching, which led to the current narrative/inductive model associated with the New Homiletic. See George M. Bass, "The Evolution of the Story Sermon," *Word and World* 2 (Spring 1982), 183.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 153. Another risk involves the audience writing their own story. Chapell sees this as a potential outflow of narrative preaching pushed to the extreme of "the master metaphor of expression." When this is done, "Personal experience becomes the master interpreter and, ultimately the ruler of understanding." Furthermore, if not careful, "people's experiences" might begin to "construct the Word of God (Deut 28:45)" when the intent of the apostles and prophets was for "their words to address the experiences of the people of God." See Chapell, *Preach With Power*, 189. Pagitt's progressional dialogue with a narrative twist seems to encourage the construction of the word more than obedience to the Word.

[251] Edmund Steimle, a proponent of the New Homiletic, writes that "if a sermon is to be biblical at its deepest level, it will draw us into the development of a plot or story, the end of which is still in doubt." Steimle is also a strong advocate of authentic dialogue preaching where "lay participation in the preparation of the sermon" is incorporated—an implemented strategy of Pagitt at Solomon's Porch. See Niedenthal, Rice, and Steimle, *Preaching the Story*, 170–71. Pagitt's inclusive ecclesiology that allows unregenerate Muslims (or any other religious affiliation) into the membership of Solomon's Porch provides one clear example of the diverse stories being written within the emergent church in the name of Christianity.

What if the listener walks away with an aesthetic experience yet completely misses the point of the story and fails to receive any clear word from God? Is this biblical preaching? Would David have missed the point of Nathan's story had he not pointed the truth in David's face declaring, "You are the man" (2 Sam 12:7)?[252] This leads the discussion back to the narrative/discourse counsel just given. A middle course for preaching the story by honoring the narrative structure of the text along with its precepts and propositional substance should be the homiletical aim. John A. Broadus touted such homiletical counsel many seasons before the advent of the New Homiletic. His timeless expositional-narrative advice reads as follows:

> But sermons on historical passages are very apt to err, in one of two directions. In the one case the preacher makes haste to deduce from the narrative before him a subject, or certain doctrines or lessons, and proceeds to discuss these precisely as if he had drawn them from some verse in Romans or Psalms; thus sinking the narrative, with all its charm, completely out of sight. In the other case, he indulges in a vast amount of the often ridiculous thing called 'word painting' overlapping the simple and beautiful Scripture story with his elaborate descriptions and showing no desire, or having no time, to give any glimpse of the lessons which the narrative teaches. There is certainly a middle course. Without consuming our time in exhibiting overwrought pictures of his own, the preacher may seek to throw light on the Bible picture, so as to make us see it plainly and vividly, and may either indicate the lessons as he advances from point to point, or group them in the latter part of his discourse.[253]

Critical to this discussion is also the inherent danger of missing the preeminent *priori* of the biblical story—Christ.[254] When the story is

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[252] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 149.

[253] John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (rev. ed. Edwin C. Dargan; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1898), 322-23.

[254] The concluding remarks of McLaren's book, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices* (Nashville: Nelson, 2008) provides an example of where McLaren mysteriously leaves out Christ as the centerpiece of the message and hope of the true kingdom of God. His final words to this work read: "What if there is a treasure hidden in the field of our three great monotheisms, long

preached void of defined, applied, and proclaimed truth culminating in Jesus, it is not true Christian preaching.[255] As Goldsworthy so aptly asserts:

> The story is never complete in itself and belongs as part of the one big story of salvation culminating in Jesus Christ. Simply telling a story based on a piece of Old Testament historical narrative, however complete in itself, is not Christian preaching. A sermon involves the application of biblical truths to the present hearers.[256]

This instructive counsel would equally be applicable to McLaren and Pagitt's use of the New Testament Gospels. Story void of propositional truth guts genuine preaching; story with propositions but no definitive truth about the person and finished declarative work of Jesus Christ voids the value of the individual story and veils the meta-narrative, historical-redemptive purpose of all of

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buried but waiting to be rediscovered? And what if the treasure is a way . . . a way that can train us to stop killing and hating and instead work together, under God, joining God, to build a better world, a city of God? What if our suffering and fear are not intended to inspire deadly cycles of defense and counterattack in a vain search for peace through domination, but instead, what if they can serve to break and soften us like a plowed field after the rain so that the seed of God's kingdom—a few notes of God's eternal harmony—can grow within us and among us? This is my hope. And this is our hope. Amen."

Is a Christian's hope ultimately found in shared practices among other world religions (Islam and Judiasm) as McLaren teaches? Or is a Christian's hope ultimately found in Christ "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). There appears to be something (the true gospel) or rather someone (Jesus Christ—the "Prince of Peace"—Isa 9:6) missing in his closing words of hope and peace for mankind (John 14:27). See Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 200-202, for a critique against this form of emergent syncretism.

[255] York chides preachers committed to an inductive, story-telling approach to preaching that allows the listener to draw his or her own conclusions. He emphatically argues that "the biblical prophets always preached otherwise" and often "got in the faces of their listeners and seldom left them to wonder about how to apply what they were saying." He even goes so far as to claim that no one should try to preach like Jesus. Jesus often employed an inductive approach with the purpose, at times, to keep His listeners in the dark. York asks, "Would we say that we preached a sermon with an inductive method so that some people listening would not repent and be forgiven?" Can the preacher always have the same purpose for preaching as Jesus? York concludes that the preacher's methodology cannot always be like Jesus. Yes, inductive elements and story-telling elements can be a part of biblical proclamation, yet he adds, "We really cannot shy away from the fact that the preaching of the prophets and apostles was almost exclusively deductive and directly applicational." See York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 15-17. This stands in contrast to McLaren and Pagitt's preaching that is almost exclusively inductive and indirectly implicative.

[256] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 150.

Scripture.[257] McLaren and Pagitt seem to encourage the former and model the latter.[258]

Third, a pointless narrative due to poor sermon design (or intentional pointless design) presents the final weakness of narrative preaching. With no clear precept to the story, the clarity of the gospel is at stake. William Carl writes about this danger in narrative proclamation: "I have discovered that sophisticated story systems and homiletical plots can obstruct the communication of the gospel if not handled in a disciplined manner. Without clear logic and theo-logic between various parts of the 'narrative' sermon, the preacher can appear to be meandering in a swamp."[259] Narrative preaching that honors postmodern sensibilities can certainly lead to this type of outcome. When multiple perspectives are entertained as part of the message—where truth is co-created as a part of the sermonic experience, with no biblical accountability or testing to separate the sermonic wheat from the chaff, it becomes difficult to discern what is the biblical point(s), or what exactly is the meaning of the gospel.

The obvious safe-guard against this pitfall, writes Greidanus, is to stake out the sermon theme (point) and then design the message along the track provided by the narrative text.[260] The challenge with such advice, might argue McLaren and Pagitt, may well be captured in the narrative counsel of Charles Rice when he insists that "we need to learn to hear and tell our own stories—not just our individual experience, but the stories we share with a given community and humankind—as much as we need to enter in

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[257] Goldsworthy's "salvation history" approach to Scripture argues that any sermon, whether taken from a narrative or discourse text, should ask the question "How does this passage of Scripture, and consequently my sermon, testify of Christ?" Ibid., 21.

[258] Listen to McLaren's sermon, "The Bethlehem Promise" for an example of a powerful life situation story (with great emotive appeal) as part of the preaching event, yet void of any salvific intent—with only good works as a part of being a follower of Jesus. The story has merit in challenging the listener to seek to do well in blessing others and living a life that is other-centered. Yet, what if the listener wrongly interprets this message as the full gospel, which has no reference to sin, salvation, and/or the purpose and meaning of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection? See Brian McLaren, "The Bethlehem Promise," *Cedar Ridge Community Church Audio Sermons*, n.p. [cited 10 Jan 2008]. Online www.CRCC.org.

[259] William J. Carl, "Shaping Sermons by the Structure of the Text," in *Preaching Biblically: Creating Sermons in the Shape of Scripture* (ed. Don M. Wardlaw; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 125. Cf. Kenton Anderson, *Preaching with Conviction: Connecting with Postmodern Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 71, where his fictional character states, "Even narrative texts usually have points. If the Bible really is a means by which God reveals truth, then the propositional intention of the text ought to be given full consideration."

[260] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 154.

and follow the Bible's unfolding story of God's ways with us."[261] Both McLaren and Pagitt, regardless of whether or not they have been influenced from Rice's narrative counsel, certainly reflect his homiletical line of reasoning. However, does not such reasoning seem to direct the attention to man and away from God? Does Scripture command preachers to preach man's story or His (Exod 4:12; Num 22:35; Jer 1:7; 2 Tim 4:2)?

Preaching His story by narrative methodology has a place, so long as the authoritative point of His story is made clear along with its corresponding application to the lives of the listener.[262] Anthropocentric messages that miss the point of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19) anathematizes the truth and tarnishes true gospel preaching (Gal 1:9). Goldsworthy is right, "To preach about us, our problems, and our way to a better life," be it McLaren's social message or Pagitt's open-armed postmodern roundtable discussions, "and to do so without recourse to the significance of the gospel, is to radically distort the understanding of humanity and the meaning of Scripture."[263] Therefore, when McLaren and Pagitt miss, purposefully reject, and/or redefine the central points of Jesus' teaching (Luke 19:10), no matter the chosen sermon method or form, they miss the authentic mark and/or symbol (1 Cor 1:18) of preaching altogether.[264]

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[261] Charles Rice quoted in Eslinger, *A New Hearing*, 20.

[262] Terry Carter, Scott Duvall, and Daniel Hays refer to this as the challenge of narrative preaching. The aim of utilizing a narrative form to "pull the audience into the story and to feel the impact of the story, while at the same time pointing out exegetically valid, yet practical and relevant, theological lessons from the text," present the two necessary goals (story-telling and application of practical theology) of narrative proclamation. See Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 229. York goes so far as to say that application is the purpose for preaching. He writes, "The purpose of preaching is to lay bare the meaning of a passage, to present its application, and show its relevance to the audience." See York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 22. This author would concur with York in the value of application yet differ in the ultimate purpose of preaching. See John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), for a different perspective—"the glory of God." Especially noteworthy is Piper's opening preaching story about a time in which he did not employ application to a particular preaching series (10)—however, this does not mean that he does not regularly implement application. Rather, he states, it is "essential in the normal course of preaching" (10).

[263] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Scripture*, 60

[264] Miller, "Narrative Preaching," 110.

Conclusion

While there exists homiletical traits to applaud and apply from these two emergent leaders, the homiletical pendulum swings toward traits to avoid. They appear to be no different from liberal preachers of the modern era having completed a detailed study and analysis of their homiletical ministry.[265] Discerning if the preaching pendulum will swing back toward the biblical center now becomes the final task of this work in evaluating the remaining two preachers—the emerging church relevants.

[265] See Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing*, 161–77, for a summary and comparative analysis of how many of the theological positions held by emergents, such as McLaren and Pagitt, reflect the same liberal tenets of the twentieth century. Whittmer specifically draws from J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923; repr., 1994) to argue this case. E.g. Machen claimed that liberals of his day believed that the next life is "a form of selfishness." Thus, "The liberal preacher has very little to say about the other world. This world is really the centre of all his thoughts; religion itself, and even God, are made merely a means for the betterment of conditions upon this earth." See Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 147–48, and 149, respectively. This modern assessment of Machen's could not be any more fitting in providing a closing postmodern assessment of the preaching theology, philosophy, and methodology of McLaren and Pagitt. Cf. also Horton's use of Machen's writings to critique the emerging church. Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 104, 121–22, 245.

CHAPTER 10
EMERGING CHURCH RELEVANTS: KIMBALL AND DRISCOLL

Introduction

Kimball and Driscoll's homiletical likeness, similar to the revisionists, could also be described using the twin metaphor—two missional preachers cut from the same emerging cloth. However, one distinct difference exists. Kimball and Driscoll's preaching message, mentality, and methods reflect more of a fraternal relationship than an identical one. What then joins these two emerging pastors under the same relevant banner?

Like some emergents that abrasively claim, "It's the theology stupid," the point none-the-less mirrors the unifying factor between these two colorful emerging pastors.[1] Homiletical differences are certain to exist in all three examined categories. Yet despite these dissimilarities, what unites them is their theological commitment to the core essentials of the evangelical/orthodox Christian faith.[2] Examining some of these homiletical similarities and dissimilarities, in light of Scripture and the revisionist critique, will be the aim of this chapter.

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[1] Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, "A New Theology for a New World," *National Pastors Conference*, San Diego, CA, 2006. Audio available online: http://www.psitapes.com.

[2] In *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches* both men had the opportunity to respond to each other's theology. Kimball writes of Driscoll, "I fully resonate with Mark's beliefs on core doctrine that aligns with the Nicene Creed." See Dan Kimball, "Response to Mark Driscoll," in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 40. Likewise Driscoll comments about Kimball, "I appreciate his emphasis on the exclusivity of Jesus for salvation, human sin, literal hell, and respect for the final authority of Scriptures." See Mark Driscoll, "Response to Dan Kimball," in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 106. For an outsider's perspective see Martin Downes, "Entrapment: The Emerging Church Conversation and the Cultural Captivity of the Gospel," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 232, who states the following about Driscoll's and Kimball's theology from his assessment of *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church*: "Driscoll is robustly *evangelical* on the Trinity, Scripture, and the atonement. Kimball is likewise clearly *evangelical* in many of his views" (emphasis added).

Message

The message, which examines both preachers' convictions about the Bible and the gospel, reveals a unified front when addressing these fundamentals of the faith. Their foundational beliefs when compared to the revisionist team present a clear polarization of theological tenets; so much so that the biblical critique of the revisionists, which revealed a sharp contrast between them and orthodox Christianity, in actuality, reflects the theological position of these two relevant emerging preachers.

Pagitt's critique of Driscoll and Kimball's theology, in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, might well strengthen this argument. He writes of Driscoll, "We are very different on many things, most notably . . . theology, theological method, and understanding."[3] Johnson would concur. Offering his theological opinion on this same work, he sees Driscoll as being on the "far right" of the five featured contributors, while Pagitt appears "at the opposite end of the spectrum."[4] Concerning Kimball, Pagitt refutes his anchored beliefs relating to fundamental doctrines of the faith while criticizing his conviction that Scripture possesses divine authority.[5]

The bifurcation is reciprocal. Driscoll, who traveled the speaker circuit with McLaren and Pagitt, broke away from the revisionist team early in his ministry. He writes, "They were looking at things like open theism, female pastors, dropping inerrancy of Scripture, penal substitutionary atonement, literal hell," which "led to a real breech with where the group was going."[6] So when did he bail out? Driscoll responds, "Once Brian McLaren was brought on . . . that's when I hit the eject button."[7] Kimball's distancing from the emergent/revisionist camp has emerged more slowly and reflects a less defined separation. However, evidence of departure is growing.

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[3] Doug Pagitt, "Response to Mark Driscoll," in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 42.

[4] Phil Johnson, "Joyriding on the Downgrade at Breakneck Speed: The Dark Side of Diversity," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 212.

[5] Doug Pagitt, "Response to Dan Kimball," in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 113–14. Pagitt believes authority would be "better placed in the Holy Spirit."

[6] Mark Driscoll, "Conversations with Contributors," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 157.

[7] Ibid.

He refused to endorse Pagitt's latest book, *A Christianity Worth Believing*, in addition to creating a new network currently known as the *Origins Project* that more closely aligns (compared to Emergent Village) with his commitment to gospel contextualization with a high view of Scripture.[8] Therefore, based on the antithetical tenets between both emerging teams, in order to eliminate redundancy, this section will often refer back to the biblical position stated in the revisionist critique when supporting the scriptural stand of the relevants.

The Bible

Kimball and Driscoll's love for the Bible is wed to what it testifies about itself.[9] No double meaning exists between what they preach and what they believe. Both men affirm the divine inspiration of Scripture, its purpose to connect man to God through Christ Jesus, and its usefulness and sufficiency for personal transformation and sanctification. Representing what might be the greatest contrast to their revisionist emerging counterparts, they both submit to Scripture as the authoritative source for Christian belief (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxy).[10]

Although Kimball and Driscoll hold similar beliefs about Scripture, differences still exist—at least in proclamation if not in principle.[11] One distinct area of deviation involves Kimball's

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[8] See Dan Kimball, "Interesting and Ay Yi Yi," *Vintage Faith Blog*, n.p. [cited 8 April, 2008]. Online: http://www.dankimball.com/vintage_faith/2008/03/index.html.

The Origins Project is a new community forming around the "sense of urgency about the mission of Jesus and evangelism." Notably, their initial framing documents state that they will be a community that shares "a high view of Scripture and a radical commitment to evangelism while being faithfully committed to what is expressed in the Lausanne Covenant." When Kimball was asked if this new community formed out of the increasing disagreement with the liberal agenda of Emergent Village, he responded by acknowledging, although vaguely, that they had been moving in a direction that no longer resonated with his vision for being missional in culture. See Dan Kimball, taken from Eric Bryant, "Teleseminar with Eric Bryant and Dan Kimball," *Eric Bryant Web Blog*, n.p. [cited 12 Jan. 2009]. Online: www.ericbryant .org/teleseminar/. For insight about the Origins Project see The Origins Project, *The Origins Project Web Site*, n.p. [cited 12 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://theoriginsproject.org/; The Luasanne Covenant, *The Luasanne Web Site*, n.p. [cited 12 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-ovenant.html.

[9] See chapter 9, footnote 8.

[10] See the Bible section in chapters 6 and 7 for a review of their belief about Scripture.

[11] One notable difference between Kimball and Driscoll is Kimball's angst for seeing the Bible as a how-to-manual or answer-everything book. This expressed concern, often heard among emergents/revisionists, is something this author has not yet observed within the writings or sermons of Driscoll. Gilley addresses this concern concerning Kimball in stating that he presents a false dichotomy about Scripture with his compass analogy, which speaks of the Bible giving directions but not many specifics. His critique of Kimball on this point would possibly represent Driscoll's position.

hermeneutic of humility. Since this approach to biblical interpretation is closely linked to postmodern interpretive methods, a hermeneutical paradigm which Driscoll rejects, it obviously presents a potential homiletical schism between these two emerging relevants that warrants further discussion.[12]

Hermeneutic of Humility

Kimball's humble hermeneutic honors the truth of Scripture while simultaneously warning homileticians to guard against the appearance, or worse yet, ownership, of an arrogant know-it-all fundamentalist attitude and belief system.[13] Desiring to maintain both a high view of Scripture and an honest assessment of his own

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Gilley writes, "The Bible serves as both a compass and the final word from God on how to live our lives to his glory. It provides authoritative answers on hundreds of subjects, everything from morals to finances to marriage to work ethics. This does not discount the true mysteries that are found in Scripture, but neither does it minimize the abundance of certainty the Word provides." See Gary Gilley, "The Emergent Church," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 280.

[12] Refer back to chapter 9, footnote 34, and pages 240–47, for a discussion on the postmodern/emergent view of humility in relation to hermeneutics and homiletics. Kimball reflects some of the same basic views about too much certainty. However, his angst does not wail against knowable truth, such as core orthodox tenets of the Christian faith. Rather his frustration is toward what he considers to be "overly opinionated Christian leaders who talk as if they have access to God's truth and know all the answers, and believe everyone else is wrong but them. Judgmental finger-pointing Christians focusing on the negatives in the world." See Dan Kimball, "The Emerging Church and Missional Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 85. Kimball writes that his being disturbed by this imagery of evangelicals is the reason he wrote *They Like Jesus, but Not the Church*. See Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not The Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 226. His frustration and thus his call to Christian humility is well noted. However, Kimball's rebuke of pompous Christians can equally raise questions about his own beliefs, or at least his vacillating with communication that draws from both revisionists and relevant playbooks. This may not have been his objective in the above quote, yet the question should still be raised; do not Christians have access to God's truth through Scripture? He would undoubtedly answer yes, which simply adds to the confusion. Driscoll is weary of any hermeneutic strategy too closely associated with emergents or postmodern sensibilities, which he refers to as "the new serpentine hermeneutic" that goes by various names such as "trajectory hermeneutic and redemptive-arc hermeneutic." See Mark Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 134.

[13] See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 187–209. Although Kimball vacillates at times between deeds versus creeds and/or doctrines (190), he presents legitimate concerns about pastors who claim a literal interpretation of the Bible without a proper understanding of basic hermeneutical principles. It is not that Kimball rejects the plain sense of Scripture, as some of his critics might claim, but rather the false claims drawn from Scripture because of hermeneutical ignorance. He writes, "If we believe that all of the Bible is inspired, then our job is to study the Scriptures with great prayer and humility and to distinguish between the literal and parables, metaphors, hyperbole, and other figures of speech. We need to teach in our churches about the origin of the Bible and how to interpret its various genres. Too much is at stake not to" (201). Kimball's hermeneutical aim in this chapter closely correlates with what is presented in Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 257–64.

interpretive fallibility, Kimball holds tightly to a few core beliefs while opposing the fundamentalist subculture that arrogantly makes peripheral issues into doctrinal absolutes—items he considers "subjective," and "not based on the Bible."[14]

This aspiration to interpret Scripture with humility equally translates to Kimball's homiletical methodology—how he communicates the interpreted message to people in culture. It is the second half of this sermonic equation that presents concern and most likely serves as the confusing catalyst that stirs his most adamant critics.[15] Kimball's desire to be a loving pastor/evangelist to people of postmodernity balanced with his aim to lead his church "to see God transform us into a worshipping community of missional theologians" is commendable.[16] Equally praiseworthy is his pastoral vision to teach hermeneutics so that the body of Christ will grow to "revere, teach, study, and discuss the Bible" as "students of the Scriptures themselves."[17] However, when the truth derived from Scripture is then communicated in what some refer to as a "whining" and "apologetic" manner, he then risks sending a double message, which can lead to, at the least, confusing the listener, and at the worst, compromising the truth, dishonoring

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[14] Ibid., 191. Some examples would include dress codes, alcohol, tattoos, style of worship, and political involvement.

[15] One of Kimball's most severe critics is Ken Silva of Apprising Ministries. Silva gives scathing critiques of Kimball's theology and alignment with the emergent/emerging church. He believes Kimball, based on his rejection of the doctrines of grace, "is actually very actively working to help reverse the Protestant Reformation." See Ken Silva, "Is Emergent Church Pastor Dan Kimball Really a 'Conservative Evangelical'?" *Apprising Ministries Web Site*, n.p. [cited 5 Jan 2009]. Online: http://www.apprising .org/2008/08/is-emergent-church-pastor-dan-kimball-really-a-conservative. This author questions whether Silva would find Kimball's views in such contrast to orthodox Christianity if he would eliminate communication that, at times, appears to vacillate on truths he holds firmly. Kimball often makes statements that can be easily misunderstood—especially if taken out of context. E.g. when discussing the importance of biblical doctrine he writes, "I understand from the very passage I am studying [1 Tim 4:16] that we should watch our doctrine very closely. I fully believe this. But it is funny as most people assume they have all the correct 'doctrine.'" Kimball then goes on to assume where he holds certain doctrines worth guarding. See Dan Kimball, "My Doctrinal Statement Can Beat Up Your Doctrinal Statement," Vintage Faith Web Site, n.p. [cited 4 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.dankimball .com/vintage_faith/2006/05/my_doctrinal _st.html. Kimball cannot help it if he is misquoted and/or taken out of context, yet aiming for greater clarity and forthrightness in communication may eliminate some of the confusion.

[16] Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 202. Driscoll, writing about Kimball's handling of biblical truth to address various cultural issues, writes, "I know Dan, I know that he regularly deals with these sorts of issues and replies with biblical truth delivered with the tact of a loving pastor." See Driscoll, "Response to Dan Kimball," 107.

[17] Ibid., 202–3 and 197, respectively. Kimball's fidelity to Scripture does not raise red flags for most evangelicals; most evangelicals rather appreciate that he has staked his flag on the inspired Scripture and seeks to know and follow Jesus by it. See Downes, "Entrapment," 232, for the flag analogy.

God, and thus misleading those within and outside the church.[18] It is for this reason Martyn Lloyd-Jones counseled preachers that "our methods must always be consistent and compatible with our message, and not contradict it. . . . The moment the method contradicts the message it has become bad."[19] "Let us have elasticity," he argued, "but never to the point of contradicting your message."[20] When Kimball heralds truth while stretching the courtship boundaries of postmodern sensibilities, he may appear humble to non-Christians of an emerging culture, yet he may be doing so at the risk of biblical perspicuity, which could potentially do more harm than good by contradicting the message.[21]

Kimball's teaching on homosexuality provides a useful example.[22] In contrast to the revisionists, who have all but welcomed the practice as compatible with Christianity,[23] Kimball has taken a stand against homosexuality as a viable lifestyle for followers of Jesus. His exegesis of Scripture (grammatical, historical, theological, and holistic investigation of the texts in question) has led to his denouncement of the practice as sin—being contradictory of God's design for sexual relationships. This stand against sexually deviant behavior shows the positive side of Kimball's humble hermeneutic—his submission to the authority of Scripture.[24]

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[18] See Ken Silva, "Dan Kimball an Effete Christianity Is Nothing To Be Gay About," *Apprising Ministries Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://apprising.org/2008/07/dan-kimball-an-effete-christianity-is-nothing-to-be-gay-about/. See Dan Kimball, "Homosexuality and the Church," Sermon Audio, *Vintage Faith Church*, n.p. [cited 11 Nov. 2007]. Online: www.vintagechurch.org. In this sermon Kimball takes a compassionate stand on biblical truth against homosexual practice.

[19] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971; repr., 1977), 138–39.

[20] Ibid.

[21] See chapter 9, footnote 35. Kimball's apologetic methodology can lend itself to the tone of uncertainty. This has the potential to undermine Scripture's authority and grieve the Spirit, whether intentional or not. Kimball understands the danger of sending mixed messages as a result of implementing a method that contradicts the message—such as when pastors preach God's wrath with "glee." See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 108. The statement above is not to imply that Kimball seeks to present an appearance of humility as a ploy for postmodern ministry.

[22] See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 136–61; and Kimball, "Homosexuality and the Church."

[23] Doug Pagitt claimed that there is no incompatibility between being a Christian and actively practicing homosexuality. See Zondervan, "The National Conversation on the Emerging Church," Panel speakers: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Doug Pagitt, and Karen Ward, n.p. *Personal notes*, June 1–2, 2007, Seattle, Washington. Cf. Mark Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture," *SEBTS Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Oct. 2007]. Online: http://www.sebts .edu/Convergent/GeneralInfo/, where Driscoll references Pagitt making this claim.

[24] Kimball's biblical stand for truth combined with compassion for the homosexual community presents the balance observed in Michael Whittmer's critique on the emerging church. He writes, "We need not compromise our moral code to reach out to those who have violated it." See

The less appealing side appears in his communication of the message. Kimball's preaching on this topic with an apologetic, grieving, and timorous style of delivery could lead people to believe that he is sorry for God's truth on this matter. His apparent sadness also appears in print, "I have found that I just can't dismiss that in the Bible homosexual practice is considered sin."[25] This reads as if Kimball would prefer to bend toward culture's desire on the subject rather than celebrate God's beautiful plan from the beginning (Gen 2:24)—"It's hard enough for me to be faithful in following God on the issue of homosexuality. . . ."[26] If the preacher is to be the mouthpiece of God, would it not be audacious or unwise (be it intentional or not) to communicate His eternal truth in an apologetic tone or spirit?[27] Is it not homiletically possible to proclaim truth with love and gentleness yet void of apology (2 Tim 2:24–26)?[28] Does Kimball's homiletical *ethos* come close to confusing compassion with compromise and/or humility with uncertainty?[29] If so, this presents a disconcerting precedent for

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Michael Whittmer, *Don't Stop Believing: Why Living Like Jesus Is Not Enough* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 82.

[25] Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 137. This apparent expression of sadness over what God deems as sin presents a different direction for sadness when compared to vintage pastors of another era. Richard Baxter instructed preachers to reprove and admonish those living in deliberate sin. In doing this he advised that great skill would be necessary based on the "tempers of the offenders" that might require different approaches. However, "With the most," he wrote, "it will be necessary to speak with the greatest plainness and power, to shake their careless hearts, and make them see what it is to dally with sin; to let them know the evil of it, and its *sad effects* as regards to God and themselves" (emphasis added). See Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (ed. William Brown; Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2005), 104.

[26] Ibid., 159. The following analogy by the editors of Light House Trails Research may be harsh, but it presents the seriousness of the subject. If the sin of homosexuality were substituted for pedophilia, this is how they describe Kimball's way of communicating would read, "'I sometimes wish molesting children wasn't a sin issue, because I have met pedophiles who are the most kind, loving, solid, and supportive people I have ever met.'" See Editors, "A Book Review: They Like Jesus, But Not the Church," *Light House Trails Web Site*, n.p. [cited 8 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.lighthousetrailsresearch .com/blog/index.php?p=546&more=1&c=1.

[27] This is especially disconcerting based on Kimball's strong assertion that lives preach better than words and/or "attitudes will speak more loudly than words." If this is true, what message then does an attitude of apology for God's design for human sexuality send? See Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 194-95.

[28] E.g. see Paul's approach to the church of Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians.

[29] See chapter 9, "Preaching with a Posture of Humility," for discussion on this topic. See Johnson, "Joyriding on the Downgrade," 218, for a warning against the emerging church's understanding of humility. Although his concern pinpoints the revisionist camp, it equally deserves mentioning here. He writes, "In biblical terms it is anything but humble to imply that God's Word is not sufficiently clear—as if we can't possibly be sure what the Bible means and as if we should never be so 'arrogant' as to defend its truths against the enemy's relentless attempts to twist and subvert what God has said. For Christians blithely to accept (or even defer to) the postmoderns premise that certainty and arrogance are essentially the same thing is to surrender a major portion of the very ground we are called to defend."

preaching that has the potential to undermine biblical truth and quench the Holy Spirit's work of convicting of sin that leads to repentance, forgiveness, and victory in Jesus Christ—a clear biblical aim of Kimball's.[30]

Lastly it highlights a potentially heretical homiletical trajectory (if it goes the way of the revisionists) and a less than biblical model for communicating God's truth, which describes preachers denouncing sin with clarity (Acts 17:30; Rom 1:18–32; 1 Cor 5:1–13; 6:9–11). Kimball's aim to guard against fundamental sectarianism and religious pharisaicalism in pursing a proper and humble missiological contextualization of the biblical message has its merits. But, like the warning with the revisionists, "going native" or in the words of Kimball's critics, becoming "ingrained in the culture," certainly has its potential dangers (liberal syncretism) and thus warrants some of their warnings.[31] Contrasting just how Driscoll handles the call for humble preaching and how it differs from Kimball's handling of it presents the second half of this discussion.

Driscoll, who places himself under the authority of the text and equally disdains some of the same fundamental Christian subculture prohibitions as Kimball, no doubt champions the same message as above.[32] He believes in holding "the timeless truths of Christianity" in a "firmly closed hand" while "graciously" holding in the other "open hand," the "timely ministry methods and styles that adapt as the cultures and subcultures we are ministering to

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[30] Kimball longs to see the truth of the Word "set people free" in this area. See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 159.

[31] Silva, "Dan Kimball an Effete Christianity." Cf. Ken Silva, "Dan Kimball and the Emergent Church Seeking Hard to Make Homosexual Sin Not Sin," *Apprising Ministries Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://apprising.org/2007/04/dan-kimball-and-the-emergent-church-seeking-hard-to-make.

[32] Driscoll states that cultural issues such as "mode of dress, tattoos, piercings, plastic surgery, music styles, use of technology in church, entertainment (including television and film), smoking, drinking, and language," need to be addressed with a thoughtful reflection on Scripture. The reason, notes Driscoll, "On many of these issues, many fundamentalist Christians are like their ancient pharisaical Jewish counterparts; they embrace numerous rules and assumptions on such cultural matters but lack clear theological and biblical support." See Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 146. Driscoll also believes that it is the fundamentalists that provide the fuel for the emergent church. "Fundamentalism is really losing the war, and it is in part responsible for the rise of what we know as the more liberal end of the emerging church. Because a lot of what is fueling the left end of the emerging church is fatigue with hard-core fundamentalism that throws rocks at culture. But culture is the house that people live in, and it just seems really mean to keep throwing rocks at somebody's house." See Mark Driscoll, quoted in Collin Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 146.

change."[33] Since the message itself does not change, he, like Kimball, takes stands against such clearly delineated sins such as homosexual practice, despite the culture and even some in the church insisting on its acceptance.[34] Seeing that there exists theological like-mindedness on central doctrines of the faith, this discussion will turn to homiletical methodology to discern if this is where the potential difference with Kimball's hermeneutic of humility might reside.[35]

A metaphorical look at Driscoll's homiletical methods presents more that just a picture of a "firmly closed hand" around doctrines of the faith. More fittingly, it pictures a preacher with a tightly clenched fist around the Scriptures and the truths they obtain—like a MMA fighter prepared for battle.[36] Although the opponent is sin and Satan and of a spiritual nature, Driscoll spares no punches in assuring his listeners hear and understand the message as being from God—not man. No jabs of uncertainty, falsely disguised as humility, enter the Mars Hill homiletical ring—especially when Scripture declares that a definitive blow must be dealt, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:4–6).[37]

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[33] Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 143. Driscoll's homiletical belief appears to reflect that of Lloyd-Jones. He wrote, in reference to 1 Cor 9:19–23, that "what the Apostle Paul says repeatedly is that while we must hold on to the essentials we must be elastic with regard to things that are not essential." See Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 137. The difference between Driscoll and Kimball on this subject is that Kimball fails to go far enough in defining clear doctrines of the faith in areas of practical theology. Driscoll commends Kimball's "middle way" approach between fundamentalists and liberals about theological certainty, yet he wisely cautions Kimball to upgrade his theological positions beyond just the Nicene Creed for it is not sufficient to address the contemporary needs of the day. See Driscoll, "Response to Dan Kimball," 106–7.

[34] Mark Driscoll, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question 3: A Prologue and Rant by Mark Driscoll," *Christianity Today*, *Out of Ur Web Blog*, n.p. [cited 10 Dec. 2008]. Online: http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren-o_2.html.

[35] Driscoll, in a sermon on explaining the emerging church, labeled Kimball as being an "Emerging Evangelical." He stated that this group holds to core evangelical doctrines of the faith while seeking to communicate in ways more relevant and applicable to culture. He affirms this team by saying "we aren't going to do any drive-bys, it's cool, alls well." A noted area of theological and thus hermeneutical disagreement is women pastors. See Mark Driscoll, "Four Lanes on the Highway," *Sermon Audio-Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 5 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.marshillchurch.org.

[36] This analogy reflects Driscoll's personal interest in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). And, based on Molly Worthen's assessment of Mars Hill, where she states that "members say their favorite movie isn't 'Amazing Grace' or 'The Chronicles of Narnia'—it's 'Fight Club,'" he probably feels right at home. See Molly Whorthen, "Who Would Jesus Smack Down," *New York Times*, n.p. [cited 12 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/magazine/11punk-t.html.

[37] See Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 100, where he explains the role of the preacher as a boxer when confronting people's resistance to the truth of the gospel.

This macho homiletical method does more than simply grip the attention of the listener.[38] It equally reveals Driscoll's hermeneutic of humility as evidenced by his submission to the text and Jesus.[39] This provides clarity and authority to the message, as derived from laborious wrestling matches with the text—a definite homiletical upside.[40] However, if the gloves come off, his preaching *pathos*, like Kimball's humble *ethos*, can potentially cause just as much harm as good—a definite homiletical downside.[41] Balance then is needed, for both Driscoll and Kimball, in honoring both the command to rightly divide the word (2 Tim 2:15) along with rightly preaching the word (2 Tim 4:1–2)—with boldness (Acts 2:14–39; 9:27–28; Eph 6:19–20), gracious speech (Col 4:6), and humility (2 Tim 2:24–25; 1 Pet 3:8–9)—so as not to create any dichotomy between the two, but rather edifying the body (Eph 4:29) and

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[38] Driscoll believes God calls men with a macho *ethos* to lead churches and preach the gospel. He writes, "When Paul said that a pastor must fight like a soldier, train like an athlete, and work hard like a farmer, he had in mind the manliest of men leading the church (2 Tim. 2:1–7). Sadly, the weakest men are often drawn to ministry simply because it is an indoor job that does not require heavy lifting." See Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 54.

For a critique of Driscoll's masculine *ethos* for men and Jesus see Brandon O'Brien, "A Jesus for Real Men: What the New Masculinity Movement Gets Right and Wrong," *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 31 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=55035. O'Brien writes, "Imposing qualities we consider masculine on an image of Jesus we consider feminine does not solve the problem. It only gives us a new problem—another culturally shaped Jesus, only masculine this time. The way to recover the biblical image of Jesus is to submit ourselves to the Scriptures and let them discipline our preconceptions. . . . In the end, the biblical image of Jesus presents a far more radical role model than Jesus the dude. Jesus was gritty, honest, and fearless. Yet his strength was not displayed in his willingness to punch evildoers in the mouth, but in his suffering at the hands of the wicked for their good. Where such strength is found—whether in a man or a woman, a latte-sipping sissy or a muscled mason—there is godly strength."

[39] Driscoll and Kimball's high view of Scripture reflects Jesus' high view of Scripture. See chapter 9 of this dissertation, footnote 8 and 40.

[40] Driscoll's describes his sermon preparation time as intense "labor" that requires wrestling with "tough texts as Jacob wrestled Jesus." Checking his studies/interpretations "with trusted teachers to ensure I have not come to erroneous conclusions" and preaching in a way that models submission to Scripture by "talking about my own sins and flaws so that they see me struggling through Scripture" are two examples that reflect Driscoll's understanding of humility. Preachers of past generations that hold him accountable are men like Athanasius, Augustine, John Calvin, and Martin Luther. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 96–98.

[41] Driscoll took off the gloves in his response to McLaren on the issue of homosexuality of which he later apologized. See Driscoll, "A Prologue and Rant," and/or chapter 7, footnotes 30–31. Cf. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 48, where Jones, in writing about Driscoll's time with Leadership Network, credits him for "outbursts" that gave the young group of preachers "a reputation as arrogant, foul-mouthed, and angry." It is important to note that the example Jones writes about, where Driscoll used the "F-word" in a sermon as a guest preacher—despite having been asked to refrain from such language—that he has apologized and asked for forgiveness. See Brad Cecil, "In Defense of Driscoll," *Axxess Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Mar. 2009]. Online: http://www.axxess.org.

fulfilling the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5)—an aim that unites both men's missional call and passion.[42]

The Gospel

The gospel for both Kimball and Driscoll is the heart and soul of Scripture as represented by the apostle Paul's pocket-size account written to the church of Corinth (1 Cor 15:3-4). Rather than abandon or outright anathematize, like the revisionists, this succinct story of what God has done for man in and through the person and finished work of Jesus Christ, both men accept and affirm it as the truth—as given in Scripture and passed down through the ages in its present orthodox, traditional, and/or evangelical form.[43] Like two opposing training camps, the gospel message of the relevants rejects any ecumenical ties, if not in whole at least in part, with the claimed gospel message of the revisionists. Determining which part and which relevant's understanding of the gospel fosters unity with McLaren and Pagitt now becomes an important question to answer.

Driscoll's unflinching, unabashed, and unrelenting desire to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ from the pages of holy writ and the playbooks of the Puritans[44] and Reformers—old and new alike—leaves little doubt that his gospel preached would never be heard from the pulpits of the revisionists.[45] As Hansen reports, his

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[42] Kimball shares with *Preaching* magazine that from the beginning "the term emerging church simply meant 'those who are trying to be missional and thinking about evangelism and what are we doing for emerging generations in our emerging culture." See Dan Kimball, "Preaching to People Who Don't Like the Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball," *Preaching* 24 (2009): 32.

[43] See the gospel section in chapters 6 and 7. Cf. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 20.

[44] Driscoll's recommended preaching source, *Light and Heat*, provides a succinct summary of the Puritans's view of the gospel that includes strong critique against modern Finneyism. Driscoll's gospel preaching mantra marches to the beat of the same message. What Bruce Bickel describes of gospel Puritan preaching, "Experimentally, the system offered a warm and contagious devotional kind of Christianity; evangelistically, it heralded a tender, aggressive, and impassioned message of substitutionary satisfaction," could equally be said of Driscoll. See R. Bruce Bickel, *Light and Heat: The Puritan View of the Pulpit and The Focus of the Gospel in Puritan Preaching* (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), 155. Additionally, like the Puritans, it would be incredulous to ever label Driscoll as a hyper-Calvinist. Once again, what can be said of the Puritans, as assessed by Bickel, that they "made a full and free offer of Christ to sinners and passionately urged the sinner to seek Him and settle with Christ," can also be said of Driscoll (156).

[45] McLaren publicly identified Driscoll's view of Jesus, and thus by implication his view of the good news, as being in dire contrast to his. McLaren, with a tone of sadness referenced what appeared to be Driscoll's remarks, although his name was not mentioned, in stating that this pastor says, "I can't worship a guy who gets beat up, I can only worship a guy who beats people up." He proceeded to refute Driscoll's interpretation of Rev 19 saying that his frame of eschatology is flawed having misread Jesus as returning for blood or judgment instead of the kind Jesus represented in the

theological stand actually "scares away emergent gurus."[46] This is not surprising understanding his antithetical beliefs with McLaren and Pagitt on theological issues such as the sin nature of man (total depravity), penal substitutionary atonement,[47] hell, and the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation—not to mention any possible intimidation derived from Driscoll's favorite picture of Christ, which he refers to as the "Ultimate Fighter Jesus" (Rev 19:11–16).[48]

Like his reformed heroes, Calvin and Luther, evidenced by one of his sons bearing their names,[49] the gospel for Driscoll centers on proclaiming the person and finished work of Jesus Christ—his ultimate hero.[50] Unlike his revisionist friends, he has

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Gospels. Believing that Jesus is not coming back to make people bleed but that He has already bled for us, argued McLaren, will affect which Jesus people believe in (good news) that will ultimately affect the flow of positive change in culture. See Deep Shift, "Everything Must Change Tour," *Personal notes*, n.p. Feb. 1–2, 2008, Charlotte, North Carolina. McLaren seems to have been referring to statements made by Driscoll at the 2006 *Desiring God Pastor's Conference*. See Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," 131–32. It is doubtful Driscoll would ever be asked to preach at McLaren's former church, and Driscoll has outright stated that both these revisionists would never be allowed to preach at his. See Driscoll, "Four Lanes on the Highway."

[46] Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 136.

[47] See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 163–77, for Driscoll's view of "unlimited limited atonement," which he believes represents Charles Haddon Spurgeon's view. He quotes him as saying in his sermon titled "General and Yet Particular," "There is a general influence for good flowing from the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ and yet its special design and definite object is the giving of eternal life to as many as the Father gave him" (174). This view seems to honor both sides of this theological debate while maintaining a strong stand against the heresy of Universalism and Pelagianism (168). While Driscoll's view of the atonement differs with the Arminian position, but not Calvinism, according to his understanding (172), he, ironically enough, stays clear of the acrimony often associated among these two groups (170). When speaking of his salvation testimony, upon his completion, he often uses a punch of humor by stating that if you are an Arminian, then "that is when I gave my life to Jesus," or if you are a Calvinist, then "that is when I was saved by God."

[48] Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 134–9; 132, respectively. Driscoll seems to be speaking of preachers like McLaren and Pagitt when writing these critical remarks against opponents of the doctrine of penal substitution, "Curiously, such critics are also commonly known to be the most vocal hypocrites, simultaneously demanding justice on the earth for the poor, oppressed, and abused, while denying God the same kind of justice that is due him by those people that he created to glorify him with sinless obedience." See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 22.

[49] Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 172. Reading the words of John Calvin, written as a young man with his future end in sight, "The thing at which I chiefly aimed, and for which I most diligently labored, was, that the glory of thy goodness and justice . . . might shine forth conspicuous, that the virtue and blessings of the Christ . . . might be fully displayed," it then becomes increasingly clear why Driscoll identifies with this Reformer and his gospel—one that he believes originates with Paul and more importantly Jesus. See John Calvin quoted from John Piper, "The Divine Majesty of the Word: John Calvin: The Man and His Preaching," *Desiring God Web Site*, n.p. [cited 26 April 2005]. Online: http://www.desiringgod.org/library/biographies/97calvin.html.

[50] Preaching Jesus as the hero presents a repetitious homiletical theme of Driscoll's. He references this type of expression a minimum of four times in his chapter on preaching in *Vintage Church*. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 96, 98, 101, and 102. Driscoll would no doubt lock minds with these two statements from Graeme Goldsworthy when he writes, "The meaning of all Scriptures is unlocked by the death and resurrection of Jesus." And, "No Bible passage yields its true significance without reference to Jesus Christ in his gospel." Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole*

resisted the emergent error of what Michael Horton refers to as "confusing law and gospel," which identifies the latter with the "command to follow Christ."[51] Avoiding this emergent deeds versus creeds driven conception of the good news, Driscoll's orthodoxy and preaching praxis models historic, orthodox Christianity—as captured in Horton's biblical view of the gospel. Horton places the emphasis on the finished work of Jesus by announcing "from heaven that he has defeated death, condemnation, and sin's tyranny, and will come again in power and glory, first to judge and then to make all things new."[52] Driscoll's gospel is what God has done in Christ Jesus for man (Jonah 2:9; 2 Cor 5:21),[53] not what man can or should do for God.[54] Driscoll's preaching is consumed by the heroic good news of Christ's person and work, not merely His incarnational example as a way of life. In light of this obvious gospel disparity between Driscoll and the revisionists, it appears unlikely then that any part of his version of the good news unites with theirs—nor does room seem to exist for ecumenical compromise. Therefore, this discussion now turns to Kimball's view of the gospel, having ruled out Driscoll's, in order to identify what part joins closely to the revisionists.

Kimball cautiously refrains from promoting any particular tribe's view of the gospel by maintaining an evangelical/emerging

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Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 54, 122, respectively.

[51] Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 114. This is the essence of Driscoll's understanding of the gospel; it is not merely a conversation about the incarnational way of Jesus—although understood as a "glorious rediscovery of a biblical truth" seeing Jesus in "culture as our missional model," for which he credits the emergents. The gospel, however, is rather a declared act of God, by God, and for God, which is not built upon, around, or on the "ideas or philosophies" of man, "but rather upon the one man Jesus Christ and the one event of his death by crucifixion," as he so adamantly explains. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 23. For his gratitude toward the emergents missional view of Jesus, see Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 127–31.

[52] Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 114. Driscoll's *Death by Love* drives home the application of what Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection means for man, as a declared and finished act of God. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 9–259. Cf. Collin Hansen, "Love Letters," (review of Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears' *Death by Love*), *Christianity Today*, n.p. [cited 14 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article/?id=70426.html.

[53] Driscoll's gospel preaching emphasizes God over man in the salvation process. It is important to note that Driscoll does not spend his time warring over this issue of Arminianism and Calvinism, nor, he claims, did Arminius or Calvin. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 170.

[54] This definitive view of Driscoll's gospel also seeks to avoid reductionism—whereby only part of God's truth is embraced. In *Vintage Church*, Driscoll outlines three truncated views of the gospel, which includes an overemphasis on the missional, experiential, and/or confessional aspect of the good news. He argues for a "full and robust biblical understanding of the gospel" that encompasses the truths captured in all three. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 24–25.

centrist position. However, his heightened emphasis on "kingdom living as disciples of Jesus," if not careful, could lead to an obfuscation of the gospel, which parts ways with orthodoxy and partners with revisionists.[55] Following Francis Assisi's lead to "preach the gospel at all times" and "if necessary use words," Kimball's counsel that "our lives will preach better than anything we can say" may sound vintage, but is it scriptural?[56] Is doing good works equivalent to preaching the gospel—Christ's person and work? Can man be the gospel or is Jesus Christ alone the gospel?[57] Does preaching the testimony of man via the medium of social action—not words—lead to regeneration, justification, and sanctification, or does this transforming work only come through preaching the person and finished work of the God-man, Jesus Christ (Rom 10:17; Col 1:28–29)?

Dever's evangelistic preaching counsel addresses these types of questions and might just provide the biblical balance needed for this discussion.[58] "Personal testimony is a wonderful thing," he writes; since the Scripture is replete with examples of it, "we should testify to the wonderful experience of receiving God's mercy."[59] Yet, as he warns, it is possible to express words that glorify God but that do not present the gospel—such as the case with the man born blind in John 9. Therefore, exhorts Dever, "Unless you're explicit

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[55] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 26. Kimball works at avoiding what Guy Waters refers to as "a most unhelpful dichotomy" concerning McLaren's view of salvation and the church's responsibility in the world. Water's describes this dichotomy as "either one can identify with a gospel that proclaims salvation to sinners (and therefore abandon the creation) or one can embrace McLaren's understanding of Jesus' and Paul's teaching concerning Christ's kingdom (and consequently mute biblical teaching on sin and redemption)." Kimball aims for a balance between these two positions. However, when a message of participation in the world with God mixes with the purity of the gospel itself, the clarity of what God has done in Christ Jesus can become clouded. Additionally the gospel, for some, can become nothing more than the experiential carrot received, not Christ crucified and risen, as a result of working to create a better world. See Guy Prentiss Waters, "It's 'Wright,' but Is It Right? An Assessment and Engagement of an 'Emerging Church' Rereading of the Ministry of Jesus," in *Reforming or Conforming? Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 208; Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 237–38.

[56] Ibid., 185, 194, respectively. Cf. chapter 6, footnote 98 of this dissertation.

[57] Horton's concern over Kimball's gospel message supplies the insights for this paragraph. Horton writes that "I am a Christian not because I think that I can walk in Jesus's footsteps but because he is the only one who can carry me. I am not the gospel; Jesus Christ alone is the gospel. His story saves me, not only by bringing me justification but by baptizing me into his resurrection life." See Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 117.

[58] Mark Dever, "The Pastor and Evangelism," *Desiring God 2009 Conference for Pastors*, n.p. [cited 12 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://www.desiringgod .org/ResourceLibrary/ConferenceMessages/ByConference/43/3572_The_Pastor_and_Evangelism/

[59] Ibid.

about Jesus Christ and the cross then it is not the gospel."[60] Dever applies this same advice to social endeavors done for the good of man and community. Yes these works can "display God's kindness," and "commend the gospel to others," and thus are "good and appropriate for the Christian to do," but, argues Dever, they preach the gospel only if the gospel has been added to them and/or "someone has told them the gospel."[61] Thus, when both testimony and verbal proclamation of the gospel are combined, effective witnessing and/or preaching can take place in the postmodern context. Yet, if the testimony is void of proclamation, a not so clear message of the gospel is given.

Kimball, like Dever, expresses a noteworthy concern for authentic Christian witness and life (Matt 5:13–16). Yet, if gospel preaching becomes confused with Christian praxis; and thus deeds become prioritized over creeds—a concern raised about the emergents, could this not lead to a distortion of the true saving good news of Scripture? Horton's concern about a Christless Christianity warns of such demise. His counsel therefore is worth mentioning, especially in light of its admonition directly aimed at Kimball. He writes, "When the focus of mission and ministry is on our kingdom living rather than on the one who brought and brings his own kingdom, ushering us and our hearers into it through his gospel, Christ-as-example can just as effectively replace Christ-as-Savior at least in practice."[62] This is not good news; this is bad news—if this were to happen (Gal 1:8–9).[63]

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[60] Ibid. Cf. Philip Ryken, "Preaching that Reforms," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes* (ed. Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 199, where he writes, "There can be no preaching conversion without an announcement of Christ's divine person and saving work, both of which need to be explained in clear doctrinal terms."

[61] Ibid.

[62] Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 115.

[63] *Christus Exemplar* has biblical merits (Matt 16:24–25; 2 Cor 5:14–21; Phil 2:1–5; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 John 3:16; 4:9–11) and thus should be embraced, preached, and celebrated. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 214. The problem arises when, as Horton alludes to, Christ as Savior is replaced with Christ as example only. When this happens, the good news turns bad; the gospel gets tainted. This is unfortunate for *sola Christus exemplar* neglects the most critical issue, as Waters explains, "The chief problem humanity faces is sin and the necessary divine response ('wrath') to that sin (Rom 1:18)." The "remedy," explains Waters, is Jesus "who has died an atoning, propitiatory death (Rom 3:21–26)" . . . whereby "his 'righteousness' accounted to the sinner in union with him, and received by the sinner through faith alone—is the basis for justification, or his pardon and acceptance before a holy God (Rom 4:6–8; 5:18–19)." This is good news. See Waters, "It's 'Wright,' but Is It Right?" 207.

The concern here is not that Kimball rejects Christ as Savior for Christ as man's example; nor is it that he does not believe in a balanced biblical view of the atonement. Rather, it is his preaching a missional gospel (Jesus as a missionary in culture) that focuses upon missional ministry that has the potential to substitute or marginalize the gospel message as what Jesus has done for

To assure the preaching of good news, one must let Scripture lead the way believing that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for justification and sanctification" as Horton exhorts.[64] The preacher must keep the person and work of Christ the message and matter "of first importance" (1 Cor 15:3 NASB).[65] This means "don't change the gospel" as Kimball insists.[66] Yet, by its very nature, it also means refusing to allow any other priority to share the homiletical stage with the Savior's gospel—not even being "missional . . . in what you are doing."[67] For, as Stott exhorts, "The gospel is not fundamentally an invitation to men to do anything. It is a declaration of what God has done in Christ on the cross for their salvation."[68] Preaching anything less or adding anything more to the pure gospel taints the message of grace and risks missing the opportunity of people coming to "experience and be transformed by the message of Jesus," the ultimate aim of Kimball's preaching.[69]

Mentality

Kimball and Driscoll's homiletical philosophy reveals much in common. Similarities abound on several fronts. Examples include: preaching as a central component of the church (ecclesiology) and its mission (missiology), preaching the meta-narrative of Scripture, preaching as a herald, preaching to experience God, preaching that

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man—what man receives—in contrast to the gospel message as mission—what man does for Him. In order to avoid the error of *sola Christus exemplar*, which is often observed with the emergents, both must be preached and appropriately prioritized. If not, warns Waters about McLaren, this type of "kingdom message in terms of horizontal reconciliation risks confusion with a moralistic appeal for inclusivity." See Waters, "It's 'Wright,' but Is It Right?" 207. Despite the potential imbalance observed by some of his critics, Kimball does openly express a balanced approach. In an interview with Eric Bryant he speaks of the importance of social missions being a core part of his church but also recognizes that they are not seeing many people come to Jesus because of it. His aim is relationship building in hopes of connecting people to Jesus. See Kimball, "Teleseminar."

[64] Horton, *Christless Christianity*, 118.

[65] Waters, "It's 'Wright,' but Is It Right?" 207.

[66] Kimball, "Preaching to People Who Don't Like the Church," 32.

[67] Ibid. Kimball states in this preaching interview that "the most important thing is: Are you a missional church in what you're doing?" No dichotomy needs to exist between being missional and preaching the gospel. The concern, as already noted, is the blending of the two in such a way that the gospel gets confused with the mission of the church and/or the incarnational ministry of Christ as the model missionary. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 217–42, for a helpful discussion on what it means to be a missional church.

[68] John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961; repr., 1981), 55.

[69] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 26. Cf. Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 118–19. Goldsworthy warns of getting Christian deeds, which are "valid biblical truths," out of perspective with the gospel of grace. When this happens, he writes, "They replace grace with law."

incorporates timeless truths with timely methods, preaching grounded in historical/grammatical/contextual/theological investigation of the text, preaching derived from diligent study in the Word, preaching guided by the Holy Spirit, preaching theological substance, preaching that explains (exposition) the Scripture, preaching with culture in view, and, most importantly, preaching Jesus as the "ultimate focus" of the sermon and/or "the hero" of the message.[70] Of these like-minded areas of homiletical agreement, one stands out that represents the most significant diversity between Driscoll and Kimball—preaching as a herald. Examining the preaching mindset of Kimball and Driscoll, concerning this difference, will be the aim of this next section.

Preaching as Herald

"Preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideals, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God," wrote James Stewart in giving the fundamental reason for the title of his work, *Heralds of God*.[71] No doubt both Kimball and Driscoll's homiletical philosophy would underscore this biblical mandate to *kerusso* (Luke 12:3; Acts 10:37).[72] Kimball declares this as true in stating that with a culture void of scriptural truth and story, "We need to proclaim, herald, and preach all the more."[73] Likewise Driscoll's preaching theology, which hammers the message of God as making all things happen through declarative speaking, and who welcomes the opportunity to put preachers in their place if they think otherwise, champions the herald's God given call and biblical conviction to definitively declare Him.[74] So what is the difference between these two heralding relevants?

The difference, in likeness to a prior discussion, seems to lie more in the realm of homiletical praxis, not principle. Driscoll declares, defends, and divides in preaching the gospel message with

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[70] Refer back to chapters 6 and 7.

[71] James Stewart, *Heralds of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 5.

[72] See Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 173, for a brief discussion on words in Scripture to describe preaching—*kerugma* ("to proclaim"), *euangelizo* ("to bring or show good tidings or news") and *kerusso* ("to be a herald"). See chapter 9, "The Herald," for further biblical support for this preaching role.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 86–91.

Johannine like conviction—"That which we have seen and heard we declare to you" (1 John 1:3). Heralding vintage, he aligns with the mission of the early church in proclaiming the mighty acts of God, not, as Stewart warns, with the "propaganda of beautiful ideas of the brotherhood of man."[75] Heralding authoritatively, he discards non-authoritarian dialogical preaching that breeds "sects and cults of various sorts and kinds" that "are prone to rise up and be led by the serpent under the guise of the Christian name and Christian sacraments."[76] Heralding repentance, he calls believers to continual confession of sins of both omission and commission and non-believers to "repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance."[77] Heralding confrontationally, he plans and prods with Jasperian fervidity[78] with the aim of crushing people's resistance "to embrace God's truth for their life," which includes unapologetically, and out of necessity, preaching the "cringe factor."[79] And finally, heralding biblically, he keeps what Stewart calls the "one inexhaustible theme" at the center of all historical,

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[75] Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 63.

[76] Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 91.

[77] Ibid., 222. The following comments of Driscoll emphasize this point and implies the difference between his approach and the revisionists: "Many other churches more akin to the so-called postmodern churches focused almost exclusively on vegetable-munching hippie Christ's humble incarnation in culture to hang out with sinful lost people, particularly the poor and marginalized. In this mindset, being a Christian means being a nice person who loves people no matter what their lives are like by trying to identify with their cultural experiences and perspectives in a non-judgmental and empathetic manner. What is lacking, however, is the understanding that when we next see Jesus, he will not appear as a humble marginalized Galilean peasant. Rather, we will see the exalted, tattooed King of Kings coming with fire blazing in his eyes and a sword launching from his mouth, with which to make war upon the unrepentant. Until the day of Jesus' second coming we are not merely to relate to people but also to command them to repent of sin and bend their knee to the King before they are grapes crushed under his foot in the winepress of his fury." See Driscoll, *Confessions*, 64.

[78] Jasperian fervidity is a statement pertaining to the colorful nineteenth century black preacher John Jasper. William Hatcher wrote that "his preaching was of that fervid, startling, and threatening sort, well suited to awaken religious anxieties and to bring the people to a public confession." Hatcher also noted Jasper's fiery tenacity describing him as having "some of the temper of the reformer." See William E. Hatcher, *John Jasper: The Unmatched Negro Philosopher and Preacher* (repr., Shelbyville: Bible and Literature Missionary Foundation, N.D.), 105, 62, respectively. This is not to imply that Driscoll always preaches in an animated, intense, or pounding style. He is often subdued and restrained in voice and mannerisms. However, in like-mindedness with Baxter, he speaks to his people "as to men that must be awakened, either here or in hell." Driscoll's affection and fervency for the truth of the Word never seems to be lacking—a homiletical trait that would have surely pleased this seventeenth century Puritan. See Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 148.

[79] Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 100. Driscoll notes that his confrontational preaching "often results in people walking out, standing up to argue, and sending in nasty emails, all of which indicate you've hit a nerve like God wants you to." Hansen describes Driscoll's confrontational side has having "made him a hero in some evangelical circles and a pariah in others." See Hansen, "Love Letters." For a discussion on the "cringe factor," see Al Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 32.

objective, and indicative preaching—the person and finished work of Jesus.[80] In the Seattle herald's own words, his missional church and thus his missional preaching is "solely, fully, passionately, uncompromisingly, wholeheartedly, unwaveringly, and continually all about Jesus as God, Savior, Lord, Hero, Hope, and Friend!"[81]

Driscoll's praxis about declarative proclamation matches his philosophical precept about preaching. Like his Reformer heroes, he interprets literally Paul's command to "preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2)" and Peter's admonition to "speak as the oracles of God" and to minister "with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 4:11). As Calvin once stated, "The Word goeth out of the mouth of God in such a manner that it likewise goeth out of the mouth of men; for God does not speak openly from heaven, but employs men as His instruments."[82] Holding to the conviction that the living God has chosen him as an instrument to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, Driscoll then speaks as a man who cannot be silent; he heralds because God has spoken.[83]

Kimball's heralding precepts reflect some of the same biblical convictions and methods as his relevant counterpart.

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[80] Stewart, *Heralds of God*, 69. Driscoll compares preaching the central theme of Jesus to a band that plays only one song. His promise to Mars Hill attendees is that they will hear about Jesus—every Sunday. See Mark Driscoll, "A Band With Only One Song," *Theologybites Blogspot*, n.p. [cited 5 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://theologybites.blogspot.com/search/label/preaching.

[81] Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 221.

[82] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, vol. 4 (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 172. Commentary on Isaiah 55:11. Driscoll might affirm Spurgeon's word on this subject—another hero of his. Spurgeon once stated, "The preacher sent of God is an echo of God's voice." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, quoted in George Burch, *Nuggets of God* (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999), 129. Martin Luther wrote a similar statement as Calvin, which reflects Driscoll's preaching mindset to herald the words of Christ as given in Scripture. He wrote, "Now let me and everyone who speaks the word of Christ freely boast that our mouths are the mouths of Christ. I am certain indeed that my word is not mine, but the word of Christ. So must my mouth be the mouth of him who utters it." Martin Luther, cited from Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994; repr., 1999), 94.

[83] Driscoll often shares that when God saved him he was given three commands, marry Grace, preach the gospel, and plant churches. See Driscoll, "Keynote Address." Cf. Driscoll, *Confessions*, 39. The idea for the wording about Driscoll's inability to be silent is drawn from Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 42. Evident in Driscoll's call to preach is what Greg Heisler might refer to as the "sovereign initiative . . . that comes through the Spirit's inward prompting." Driscoll preaches Christ because God chose him to preach, not because he chose preaching as a career. See Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman, 2007), 71. An interesting observation is that both revisionists are moving further away from a preaching ministry in the local church. McLaren has stepped down as pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church for a socio-political speaking role, and Pagitt is planning for a run at the Minneapolis state legislature in 2010.

However, unlike Driscoll's old school approach, he appears to align more closely with postmodern sensibilities in praxis. Heralding repentance and heralding confrontationally, or lack thereof, present two noteworthy examples.

Scripture is replete with the preacher's command to call people to repentance—both sinner and saint.[84] Humanities problem with sin and God's promised response to deal with it—"for the wrath of God is revealed" (Rom 1:18)—as holy and righteous judge, presents a serious and urgent need for a declarative announcement to repent and be reconciled to God (Acts 2:38; 2 Cor 5:20). Like Driscoll, Kimball does not back away from the truth of the message. However, does he lean far enough forward with the heralding intensity that at times the message requires?[85] Taking a

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[84] Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 256. See Acts 20:20–21; Revelation 2–3.

[85] E.g. in *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*, Kimball provides a pastoral situation of having to present his position against homosexuality with a woman actively engaged in a lesbian relationship who was seeking a leadership position in the church. Although she had been allowed to serve in multiple capacities (even one identified ministry team), when she pursued a teaching role, which put Kimball "in a rough spot," he denied her the opportunity based on the church's biblical position. He describes the encounter with this woman as a "horrible situation for both of us. With anguish and tears, I explained that I couldn't let her serve in that position. I felt I was yanking my heart out, and yanking her heart out, and slamming them both on the ground." Kimball's teaching this woman about the church's biblical position on homosexuality was just that, the biblical and thus right thing to do. However the story leaves no indication that a call to repentance of sin was a part of his instruction. Kimball's aim in sharing this story was to provide an example of how truth can be shared in a way that is "non-homophobic" or "sexually uptight," non-judgmental, loving, and gracious.

In this example, Kimball presents a false dichotomy or exaggerated caricature of the church/preacher when it involves addressing sin directly and calling people to repentance. He seems to characterize a forthright approach in dealing with sin, as unloving and judgmental— especially if the party is offended in any way. However, this need not be the case. This particular story gives no indication that the woman ever repented of sin and placed her trust in the Lordship of Christ. The concluding emphasis of the story presented a woman who was welcomed and loved in the church until she departed despite her ongoing homosexual relationship. The point here is not to question Kimball's pastoral heart for this particular woman, but rather his philosophy and methodology in dealing with her sin, which directly relates to his preaching. As stated above, instruction against sin is biblical, but so is rebuking one in sin (2 Tim 3:16), which can lead to a reconciled relationship with God (2 Sam 12:1–15; Ps 51). See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 160–61. A herald's sharp rebuke need not be labeled as unloving if the intent is to lovingly herald truth and repentance to non-Christians and shepherd the church through repentance that leads to being "sound in the faith" so that "times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Titus 1:13; Acts 3:19).

If Kimball is not careful, his *apologizing* for God in a postmodern context, for the truth and gospel of Christ, could turn in to making apologies for God. See Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 22, for insight to the wording chosen for this statement and a discussion about its intrinsic warning. Loscalzo calls for authentic preaching that quits making excuses for God. He writes, "Timid sermons that dismiss the sticky issues of Christian faith, sermons that water down the demands of the gospel, pabulum preaching pleasing to people's ears but unable to offer transformed lives will be transparent to the skeptical lenses of postmodernity." Kimball does not water down the truth, but as one critic writes, there are some places in his message that "feels a little damp." Pushing for preaching "about Jesus and his saving grace rather than judging and condemning them," as Kimball exhorts, does ring of truth,

biblical stand against sin by imparting biblical truth through instruction and dialogue has its place in the church, but so does faithfully heralding to "convict those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). [86] Gary Gilley contends that this is exactly what is needed in today's pluralistic, postmodern context. He writes:

> Perhaps there has never been a time when it has been more vital to present the gospel message clearly and without apology. That Christ died on the cross to save us from our sins and give us his righteousness is the good news, which the sinner must understand. The issue on the table is sin, not felt needs. Our postmodern generation needs to hear that we have offended a holy God and are thus separated from him. If we do not tell them this we are in danger of preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:9).[87]

A lack of distinction between, or implementation of, both teaching and rebuking, if not careful, can undermine the herald's authority (Titus 2:15). It also may condone what is condemned, and thus confuse and mislead non-Christians about the horridness of sin in light of the holiness of God—leaving them in a not so loving predicament (Titus 1:15– 16).

Kimball's heralding confrontationally interrelates with the same concern as above. In an interview with *Preaching*, Kimball asserts that a messenger of Jesus cannot just say, "We'll, you've got Jesus wrong. He ain't like Gandhi. That's offensive. He's the Son of God!"[88] His reasoning, he argues, is this philosophy or method of confrontational preaching has the potential to "shut people out."

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but not at the expense at going light on repentance, which just might represent one biblical doctrine that has become somewhat diluted. See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 106; Kevin McFadden, "They Like Jesus But Not the Church," *9 Marks Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 Nov. 2008]. Online: http://www.sites.silaspartners .com/partner/Article_Display_Page//0,,PTID314526%7CCHID598014%7CCIID2412404,00.html. In this review of *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*, McFadden notes that through out the book Kimball "deemphasizes God's judgment of sin." See also Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (ed. John T. Wilkinson; London: Epworth, 1939), 145, where he warns, "Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures upon a drowsy request of one that seemeth not to mean as he speaks."

[86] E.g. Peter's sermon at Pentecost was more than simply him sharing his theological understanding of what had taken place with Christ at Calvary. Rather it was a declarative proclamation of truth about Christ and man that called forth a response of repentance by the working of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14–41). Cf. Gal 2:11–21; Jas 4:1–9.

[87] Gary E. Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home: A Faithful Church in Deceptive Times* (Webster: Evangelical, 2006), 50.

[88] Kimball, "Preaching to People Who Don't Like the Church," 30.

His conclusion implies that it is unfortunate that "a lot of preaching forms have been like that."[89]

Ironically, Kimball's relevant counterpart often heralds in this exact manner—seeing it used by God to bring people into the church by the hundreds, if not thousands.[90] Better yet, Kimball's missionary model, Jesus, likewise used direct and provoking language to expand His kingdom (John 4).[91] His voice through Scripture continues this trend by commanding preaching that by definition will require confrontation, contending, and yes, the "cringe factor" (2 Tim 4:1–5).[92] As Carson contends, there are multiple examples of confrontation in Scripture, "not only from the ministry of Jesus, but from the ministries of Peter, Paul, John, and others. . . . Think, for instance of Jude!"[93] In an attempt to contextualize the message to a postmodern culture, in hopes that non-Christians might come to love Jesus and like the church,

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[89] Ibid. See Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 141, for a different approach. Lloyd-Jones appears to argue that it is the right approach to make clear and plain just how wrong man is—in every way.

[90] It is important to note that a genuine work of God is just that, God's work (1 Cor 3:6). A faithful herald ought to define his success by his faithfulness to the Word, not by the number of people drawn to it, or to Him. God may draw thousands; God may draw but a few. See Mark Dever, "Pastoral Success in Evangelistic Ministry: The Receding Horizon," in *Reforming Pastoral Ministry* (ed. John H. Armstrong; Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 239–62, for a biblical discussion on pastoral success. He defines biblical success by faithfulness, not numbers of people. Likewise Heisler credits church growth to the work of the Spirit. He writes, "Whether God chooses to open hearts and pull back the scales of unbelief is his sovereign ministry through the Spirit." See Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 58. In Driscoll's case, it appears the Spirit of God is drawing thousands to hear the Word proclaimed as he seeks to be a faithful herald who is willing to be confrontational for the sake of the gospel (Acts 17:29). See Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 129, for a biblical defense of confronting error in a postmodern world. Mohler writes that "error must be confronted, heresy must be opposed, and false teachings must be corrected."

[91] This is not how Kimball interprets Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. Rather he refers to this evangelistic encounter as an example of how He built relationships and asked questions in a conversational and non-confrontational approach in sharing about the kingdom. He writes that Jesus "stopped and asked questions of the Samaritan woman (John 4) and didn't just jump in and say, 'Samaritans are all wrong.'" See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 167. Kimball's critics are not so confident of his interpretation of this text. Roger Oakland strongly opposes Kimball's interpretation believing that "Jesus did the exact opposite! He didn't ask her any questions, and he confronted her straight on." Kimball's interpretive underpinning, according to Oakland, is derived from a false premise that "Christians should not do or say anything that might offend unbelievers, even if that anything is truth and Scripture." See Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . a New Reformation or an End-Time Deception* (Silverton, Lighthouse Trails, 2007), 45–7. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 207. Carson notes the gentle approach of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, but, he writes, "Jesus will not allow her to duck her sexual promiscuity (4:16–18), and he certainly hits the mark, judging by her own self-assessment (4:19).

[92] It will also require confronting non-Christian worldviews. See Michael Kruger, "The Sufficiency of Scripture in Apologetics," *TMSJ* 12 (2001): 77. He writes, "If a Christian engages a non-Christian in a debate without challenging his overarching worldview, then his effectiveness will be minimal; each side is playing by its own set of rules."

[93] Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 207.

Kimball's non-confrontational homiletic might just inadvertently be itching the ears of those he is trying to reach.[94] Furthermore, some would argue that seeking to establish a neutral ground with non-Christians before proclaiming Christ is ineffective if not impossible and inconsistent with biblical truth.[95] Therefore in light of Scripture and the role of the Holy Spirit, discarding or diluting this form of preaching might actually be an offense to God instead of an offense to man.[96] As Heisler notes, "The Holy Spirit of God is confrontational, and his conviction is powerful. He will not empower nonconfrontational preaching that waters down the

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[94] Kimball's statements about homosexuality could be construed by some as embracing the spirit of this age over the Spirit of the Scriptures. He writes, speaking of gay people, that "I [have] come to understand that their sexual orientation isn't something they can just turn off. Homosexual attraction is not something people simply choose to have, as is quite often erroneously taught from many pulpits." See Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 138. Kimball, as previously noted, does hold to an orthodox view of Scripture on this subject. Yet even then, is there not a double message sent when statements like "I don't take the issue lightly or without compassion for those who may be hurt by hearing my position" is stated alongside scriptural truth? Is this a postmodern or emergent homiletical phenomenon to equate truth that frees people from bondage and sin with hurting people? If a preacher's homiletical philosophy begins to incorporate the view that proclaiming truth actually hurts people, will it be long before that preacher stops sharing truth or changes his message? Whether Kimball agrees with it or not, critics are associating his views on homosexuality with that of the emergents although distinct differences exist. See Oakland, *Faith Undone*, 210–11. He would undoubtedly disdain this kind of broad labeling among critics of the emerging church, yet his lack of confronting or contending for scriptural truth against the heretical teachings of his emergent friends (McLaren and Pagitt) contributes to the contention of many pastors who are seeking to understand the doctrinal distinctives of the emerging church movement. Scripture does provide evidence for naming names against heretics to defend the truth, especially when the "ruin of hearers" or the risk that they "overthrow the faith of some" is at stake (2 Tim 2:14–18).

[95] Kruger, "The Sufficiency of Scriptures in Apologetics," 75–82. Kruger writes, speaking to the apologetical ineffectiveness and irony of neutrality—which certainly can apply to preaching—that believers "agree to meet unbelievers on some common ground because they are convinced that it will make them more effective, when in fact that is the very thing that hinders them." Kruger uses the example of David's attempt to wear Saul's armor (1 Sam 17:38–39) against Goliath to provide support for his point—"It seemed like the right thing to do in battle, but it proved to be more of a hindrance than a help." Cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 141. Lloyd-Jones writes that "no one has been 'reasoned' into the Kingdom of God; it is impossible. It has never happened, it never will happen."

[96] A faithful herald has both the responsibility to announce and contend for the message given, which by definition will require confrontation that is offensive to man (Jude). This is to be expected of biblical preaching for the cross is offensive to those who do not believe (1 Cor 1:18). And, it can result in persecution, thus the charge by Paul to Timothy to "endure afflictions" (2 Tim 4:5). Does it offend God when heralds do not contend for the faith when given prime opportunities to refute false doctrines/teachers? This author observed an example of the diversity between Kimball and Driscoll that would apply to this matter when attending the *Zondervan, National Conversation on the Emerging Church*. Both men were asked to respond to whether or not they believed there were core doctrines that believers could hold to with absolute confidence. Driscoll's response was a non-hesitant, "I'm sure of it." Kimball responded that he gets fidgety, nervous, and starts rambling when having to discuss issues such as core doctrines. See Zondervan, "Conversation on the Emerging Church." In like-manner Driscoll has confronted publicly, yet graciously, some of the heretical teachings of the revisionist—by name, where Kimball has passed on identifying specific revisionists for their heretical teachings. See Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture," and Kimball, "Teleseminar."

gospel, compromises the Word, and takes sin lightly."[97] Heralding with compassion, love, grace, and kindness is a biblical mandate, but no dichotomy need exist between these homiletical aims and the necessity of timely confrontation and/or purposeful contention.[98] A balance then is called for in preaching that guards against what Chapell refers to as getting "stuck in one gear," or just as detrimental, refusing to engage some homiletical gears all together.[99] Examining some of the homiletical gears (methods) used by these two relevants to proclaim their message, now becomes the final topic for critique.

Methodology

Like the revisionist, both Kimball and Driscoll's homiletical methodology closely correlates with their preaching theology and philosophy. As a result, two specific preaching characteristics most clearly mark their like-mindedness in homiletical methods. First, both men anchor their preaching in expositional methods that communicate the truth of Scripture, albeit in different forms, wed to authorial intent and scriptural authority. Second, both preachers incorporate methods conducive to contextualizing the message in the best means possible for effective communication. Of these two preaching traits, the latter represents the most distinct, colorful, and a controversial difference between these two relevants.[100] Examining two of these homiletical methods: 1) multi-sensory-

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[97] Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 60.

[98] Bryan Chapell offers insightful teaching about the diverse role of the preacher that calls for many approaches to proclaiming truth. He counsels preachers to "speak in a manner appropriate for the truth being presented and the situation being addressed" (89). He also speaks about the diversity among pastors in how they express authority "based on persons, circumstances, and issues present" (92), which would equally apply to this discussion on heralding confrontationally. See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 88–93.

The discussion in this section on Kimball is not to imply that he rejects all heralding that calls for repentance or that is confrontational. His audience and cultural issues will dictate what is appropriate in his context. Yet based on his writings, and available sermons (limited), his homiletical approach appears to bend, at least in the two cases presented above, more toward postmodern sensibilities or contemporary cultural context than a biblical context and example in heralding for repentance and with confrontation.

[99] Ibid., 89. See Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 59–61, for a helpful discussion (warning) on the importance of the Holy Spirit's role in preaching confrontationally. Heisler remarks, "Preaching that is soft on sin and fearful of confronting people reveals that we prefer the Spirit of God who comforts us but run from the Spirit who convicts us" (60).

[100] The former trait represents the greatest methodological difference between the revisionist and relevants. A review of the biblical critique in chapter 9 provides insights to the fundamental differences between these two emerging church streams.

experiential-holistic preaching and 2) inculturated scatological Seattle street preaching, provides the concluding focus of this chapter.

Multi-Sensory-Experiential-Holistic Preaching

Kimball's preaching methodology combines both verbal (monosensory) and experiential (multi-sensory) proclamation.[101] He believes this holistic homiletical approach leads to "more impactful learning" for a missional church in an emerging/postmodern culture.[102] This new method of heralding evolved out of his *exegeting* the culture, seeing how people learn, and then having the courage to "to break out of the systems of preaching we've been locked into before,"[103] having concluded that emerging generations, nonbelievers and believers, desire multi-sensory worship.[104]

This novel, or what he considers vintage approach to *kerruso*, incorporates creative and participatory methods such as video, art, drama, dialogue, creative props, prayer stations, and ancient dress, with the aim that people might experience a deeper engagement with God and His Word.[105] Proponents of this heralding format seem to represent both emerging and non-emerging types.[106] A biblical precedent, along with pragmatic

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[101] Kimball, "Preaching to People Who Don't Like the Church," 30–31.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 127, 134–42. Kimball draws his ideas for creating sacred spaces for multi-sensory worship from nonbelievers and believers alike.

[105] See chapter 6 of this dissertation, pages 18–21. Kimball argues that multi-sensory preaching is not a recent fad but rather an ancient or vintage expression of God and His people in the Old Testament and the early church in the New Testament. He writes that "the modern church (in particular the theologically conservative and seeker-sensitive church) has forgotten the multisensory aspects of who God is and the multisensory dimensions of worship." Referring to Jesus as the "multisensory, multidimentional Word," he notes that the church has "reduced him to mere words and facts to learn." See Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 128.

[106] Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 162–66. Johnston advocates some of the same multi-sensory preaching methods as Kimball. He quotes Calvin Miller in support of some of his arguments. Miller may applaud some of the narrative/experiential methodologies incorporated to reach postmoderns. E.g., Miller states, concerning the use of videos in preaching, "The only important question for the church is, 'Can the church become pictorial in order to live, or will it remain only audio and die?'" See Calvin Miller, *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 115. Caution might be warranted with such a statement, especially in a postmodern context. As David Allen warns, "Imagery can lead to Idolatry." E.g. during the Renaissance period image overshadowed the Word; during the Reformation period the Word was reestablished over image. The key, argues Allen, is that the visual cannot overpower the verbal, for the verbal is paramount in preaching. These preaching remarks of David Allen were taken from personal notes of this author as an attendee at the *National Preaching Conference*, held in Dallas, Texas, April 2006.

considerations of how to best communicate to a changing culture, appears to be the unifying factors.[107]

Graham Johnston's counsel in *Preaching to a Postmodern World* highlights arguments for why homiletics in the twenty-first century should incorporate multi-sensory methodology—such as Kimball's. His reasons include evidence for creativity as revealed in Scripture, practical communication advantages to incorporating diverse preaching mediums that reflect culture, and the fact that postmodern's have transitioned from word to image.[108] Therefore, Johnston argues, "How you communicate God's timeless message will constantly be changing and, yet, God's Word won't."[109] His methodological conclusion that the medium is neutral and requires liberal adaptation for effective contextual communication would no doubt find favor with both relevants. Yet the focus here will not aim at debating the potential merits of multi-sensory-creative-participatory-preaching,[110] but rather take notice of one of its possible weaknesses observed in Kimball's application of this postmodern form.

What happens when a multi-sensory sermonic medium, designed to appease a postmodern culture, ends up canceling out

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See Ed Young, *The Creative Leader: Unleashing the Power of Your Creative Potential* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), for another contemporary example (yet non-emerging) of a pastor who incorporates multi-sensory worship experiences/teaching couched in the terms of creativity. Like Kimball, Young grounds his creative convictions in the nature of God stating that to use it is "not an option for the church; it is a biblical mandate that flows from the very character of the Creator" (18). See also Rick Blackwood, *The Power of Multi-Sensory Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), who writes about the values of multisensory preaching from an expositional framework.

[107] See Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 127–31, for a biblical defense for multi-sensory worship, which includes teaching. Kimball, instructing the emerging church to incorporate all five senses in worship—smell (Exod 25:6; Mal 1:11; Phil 4:18), touch (Ps 47:1; Acts 6:6; 1 Cor 11:23–24), taste (Ps 34:8, 119:103; Rev 10:10), hearing (Ps 150; Matt 26:30), and sight (Exod 25:3–7; 1 Kgs 6:29-30)—writes "God communicated in a multisensory way and received multisensory worship. In the emerging church, we must revisit a holistic multisensory approach to worship, an approach which is biblical" (129). Cf. Young, *The Creative Leader*, 15–18; Blackwood, *The Power of Multi-Sensory Preaching and Teaching*, 73–81. Blackwood argues that God is not only into "multisensory communication" but that he is the "pioneer" of it (75). Therefore, Blackwood believes, "The pastor who teaches in a multisensory form is not mimicking the culture; he is mimicking the Creator" (77).

From a pragmatic standpoint, Kimball's words that claim the "emerging generations really want to experience the spiritual," and thus raising the question, "Shouldn't our worship gatherings provide that for which they crave?" seems to reflect a common theme of crafting worship and teaching experiences to emerging/postmodern sensibilities. See Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 144. This appears similar to the aim of the seeker-sensitive church movement.

[108] Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 164–66.

[109] Ibid., 163.

[110] Blackwood's multi-sensory preaching aims for the benefit of what he refers to as the "multisensory effect: The more senses the teacher stirs in the audience, the higher the levels of audience attention, comprehension, and retention." See Blackwood, *The Power of Multi-Sensory Preaching and Teaching*, 28.

the message itself? Could an experienced driven culture fed by multi-sensory worship and preaching ultimately lead to a pragmatic feelings based faith that is sustained by communal experiences and orthopraxy instead of orthodoxy and Christ? Certainly this outcome is possible.[111] Kimball understands this danger and thus rightly warns against "focusing so much on experience that we teach people to respond only by feelings and emotions."[112] Therefore, in light of this potential problem, "Let's make sure," writes Kimball, "Jesus is in the center and that we help people maintain a high holy view of God."[113] He continues, "May we never create experiential worship services that end up drawing more attention to the experience than to Jesus. Jesus must be the center of all our worship. . . ."[114] Thus, Kimball's preaching theology and philosophy help provide a healthy balance for his multi-sensory methodology—guarding against the experiential elements overshadowing the message and thus robbing the sermon of its power.[115]

Kimball's homiletical call for "returning to a no-holds-barred approach to worship and teaching so that when we gather, there is no doubt we are in the presence of a Holy God," honors Scripture and therefore honors the Savior.[116] Many preachers would undoubtedly commend him for preaching that raises the banner of God high above the banality of anthropomorphic religion and worship. Yet some would likewise raise a yellow caution flag when statements of such experiential fervor are juxtaposed with

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[111] Ibid., 74–75, for examples of preachers who disdain multi-sensory preaching for this very reason, along with his handling of their concerns. Paul certainly understood the dangers of allowing the medium to overpower his content (1 Cor 2:1–4). This is why, writes Shaddix, that he "was careful to ensure that nothing was ever allowed to cancel out his message." "Spiritual treason," he warns, awaits those preachers who allow contemporary issues such as "conversational speech," "visual age," and/or the "postmodern mind-set," to dictate or champion their direction in preaching. See Jim Shaddix, *The Passion Driven Sermon: Changing the Way Pastors Preach and Congregations Listen* (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 30–31. Another potential weakness of multi-sensory preaching captured by Shaddix is noted in the following statement: "Someone has said that the way you get the people into church is the way you're going to have to keep them" (54).

[112] Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 131.

[113] Ibid., 170.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Darius Salter, writing on preaching as art, warns that "technologies for the purpose of preaching and worship aids are often foiled by advantaging us rather than glorifying God." Yet he does not exclude multi-sensory aids altogether. He also states, "This is not to say there is no place for film clips, object lessons, and scenic images on screen, accompanying both song and sermon. Creativity is hard work and heart work, and the temptation to fill sermonic space with imported artistry is often banal and far less profound than the 'word' that it needs to convey" (12). See Darius L. Salter, *Preaching as Art: Biblical Storytelling for a Media Generation* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2008), 14.

[116] Kimball, *Emerging Church*, 116.

statements that could potentially undermine the value of the Word. Kimball, writing on the subject of emerging worship, says, "It isn't about clever apologetics or careful exegetical and expository preaching. . . . Emerging generations are hungering to experience God."[117] Opinions would likely differ on the biblical accuracy of this statement, which no doubt sounds spiritual for emerging/postmodern ears. Yet, if Kimball is not careful, these words could also sound a bit Schleiermachian, which could lead to the demise of his preaching aim mentioned above, while stoking the fire of his critics who equally are concerned about upholding truth to an emerging generation.[118]

Caution and careful discernment is warranted for Kimball's multi-sensory preaching to the emerging church. Postmoderns, whom Carson claims treasure "experience over against truth," might just substitute the experience felt—through the multi-sensory preaching event—for truth itself. [119] As a result Satan could deceive the work of genuine salvation and sanctification grounding faith on subjectivism, existentialism, and emotionalism, instead of the biblical Savior. Therefore, as Os Guinness observes, knowing that "Christians are always more culturally short-sighted than they realize" and thus "often unable to tell . . . where their Christian principles leave off and their cultural perspectives begin," it would appear wise to continually sift preaching methodologies through the Scriptures in order to guard against becoming wed to the spirit of this or any age.[120] When this is done, exposition of the text will

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid. Gilley's summary of Friedrich Schleiermacher's influence on the emerging/postmodern church sounds this warning. He writes, "Schleiermacher's basic philosophy seemed benign enough, and not that far from conservative theology. He believed religion is primarily not a matter of doctrine, but of feeling, intuition and experience. But once that door was opened the fundamentals of the faith quickly began to evaporate. Soon Schleiermacher was instructing his students that the creation of an experience, not the teaching of the Word, was to be the object of the preacher." See Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home*, 46. Cf. Gary L. W. Johnson, "Introduction," in *Reforming or Conforming? Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 15–26, for his repeated reference to, in his own words, the "parallels between the post-conservative/emergents to Schleiermacher" (23).

[119] D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29. Carson also notes that preachers with postmodern sensibilities lean more toward Bible study and preaching as narrative, which reflects the homiletical direction of Kimball. See Kimball, "Teleseminar."

[120] Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity,1983), 42. Richard Lischer notes that most church members (which would have to include pastors) "would never dream that the light shows, videos and PowerPoint presentations that accompany the Sunday sermon represent a fundamental lack of confidence in the spoken word of God. . . . The techies have become the most valuable members of the 'sermon team' which includes a planning process in which the

remain the prominent means by which to experience God—over labyrinths, sacred spaces, and sensual experiences—for, as Paul declares, "faith comes by hearing and hearing from the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).[121] Mohler's preaching counsel seems to concur. He writes, "To replace the expository preaching of God's Word with anything else at all is to *abandon* the means God has determined to use to call His people to Himself."[122] Abandoned does not apply to Kimball's methodological combination of *theotopical* exposition and multi-sensory experiences, but it does provide a timely warning.[123] If pastors want to see the elect called out by God to faith in, and life through, Jesus Christ, they must remember His primary means is heralding by exposition, not by experience.[124]

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priestly encounter with the word of God has been displaced by something nearer to a group engineering project." See Richard Lischer, *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 24–25, quoted in Michael Pasquarello III, *Christian Preaching: A Trinitarian Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 45. Pasquarello believes the appeasement of culture through technological methods reduces "Christianity to a gnostic message that separates the form of the gospel from its content . . . ."

[121] Edmund Clowney cautions giving into preaching fixated on seeing instead of hearing—despite living in an image shaped and driven culture. "Hear him," he repeatedly exhorts, not see him (Luke 9:35). He writes, "Never forget the power of preaching the Word of the Lord. The Word that grew and prevailed in the apostolic church was the Word of Christ, the Word of power. The Gospel is the Word spoken by the living, ascended Lord. What transformation the Word of Christ brings to your ministry of the Word! Are you dismayed by an age that will not read, that will only look at pictures? Do you believe that Jesus Christ still speaks, and calls men and women to hear him? Tremble, preachers of the Word, for he speaks through you, if he has indeed called you to make you a proclaimer of his Word" (177). See Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 165–79.

[122] Emphasis added. Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 61. This is one of the dangers of image based worship. J. I. Packer provides the following warning: "The mind that takes up with images is a mind that has not yet learned to love and attend to God's Word. Those who look to manmade images, material or mental, to lead them to God are not likely to take any part of his revelation as seriously as they should" (49). See J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), 43–51. See also Ryken, "Preaching that Reforms," 203, for a brief argument against multi-sensory preaching that includes insights from a survey (although unscientific) that revealed greater retention levels with expository methodology. Ryken remarks, "Few things are more powerful and persuasive than a living voice preaching a living Word, and thus the personal proclamation of God and his gospel will never become obsolete."

[123] See also Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 9, for an insightful challenge to image based learning. Referencing the second command of the Decalogue, he writes, "The God of the Jews was to exist in the Word and through the Word, an unprecedented conception requiring the highest order of abstract thinking. Iconography thus became blasphemy so that a new kind of God could enter a culture. People like ourselves who are in the process of converting their culture from word-centered to image-centered might profit by reflecting on this Mosaic injunction."

[124] Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 61. Piper emphasizes this importance in stating, "Exposition of texts is essential because the gospel is a message that comes to us in words, and God has ordained that people see the glory of Christ—the 'unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8)—in those gospel words. See John Piper, "Preaching as Expository Exultation," in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton:

Driscoll's use of Seattle street language or the common *lingua franca* of postmodern culture to proclaim the person and finished work of Jesus Christ presents his most admired (by some) and ignominious (by others) preaching method.[125] Terms to describe his preaching abound, ranging from the pleasant to pejorative.[126] Even Tim Challies, who wrote the book on spiritual discernment for our present age, cannot discern whether to identify him as a "darling" or a "demon."[127] Even when lighthearted jabs are put aside, there exists a deep-rooted concern by some evangelicals about his method of preaching Scripture, most particularly his use of scatological language and offensive humor.[128] Driscoll's signature

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Crossway, 2007), 115. Cf. Ryken, "Preaching that Reforms," 204, where he claims, "Preaching is God's primary and permanent method for converting sinners and teaching them to grow in grace."

[125] Whorthen describes Driscoll's preaching ministry as having "made him one of the most admired – and reviled – figures among evangelicals nationwide." See Whorthen, "Who Would Jesus Smack Down." Steve Camp used the term ignominious (marked by shame or disgrace) to provide a one word review of Driscoll's *Nightline*, ABC Television coverage. See Steve Camp, "Driscoll on Nightline . . . Jumps the Shark," Steve Camp Blog, n.p. [cited 29 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.stevenjcamp .blogspot.com/2009/01/driscoll-on-nightline-jumps-shark.htm. Camp's angst with Driscoll and this particular news coverage is the emphasis on "Mark's pulpit antics, seedy humor, titillating language and graphic stories. It is not the preaching of God's Word. It's all about him – and he knows it." See Mark Driscoll, "Sermons With an Edge: Evangelical Preacher Mark Driscoll Talks Jesus and Sex," interview by Nightline, *ABC News Website*, n.p. [cited 29 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://www.abcnews .go.com/video/playerIndex/id=6746393.

[126] Other collected descriptions include: bawdy, bold, brash, bright, clever, coarse, colorful, convicting, cool, crass, creative, crude, direct, disconcerting, distasteful, earthy, edgy, entertainer, frank, funny, gifted, harsh, hipster, humorous, irreverent, juvenile, macho, offensive, performer, potty-mouth, pugnacious, profane, provocative, racy, raw, reformed ribald raconteur, salacious, sarcastic, shocking, smart-aleck, smart-a_ _, smutty, straightforward, trashy, vulgar, and witty.

Driscoll's most infamous label, thanks to Donald Miller, is probably "Mark the Cussing Pastor." See Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 134. Driscoll likens this labeling as to a "high school photo in the yearbook that you hope no one sees." See Mark Driscoll, "Interview with Mark Driscoll," interview by Ed Stetzer, *Acts 29 Network*, n.p. [cited 6 July 2007]. Online: http://www.acts29network.org/acts-29-blog/interview-with-mark-driscoll-by-dr-ed-stetzer/.

[127] Tim Challies, "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Mark Driscoll," *Tim Challies Web Site*, n.p. [cited 10 April 2008]. Online:www.challies.com/archives/articles/how-do-you-solve-a-problem-like-mark-driscoll.php. For Challies' book see Tim Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007). Don Whitney endorses this book by stating, "I've simply never read a more thorough, practical, and biblically sound treatment of this subject" (back cover).

[128] Driscoll's method of preaching on sexual matters has also drawn sharp critiques. See Ingrid Schlueter, "Sexpert Pastor Mark Driscoll is Told, 'Enough is Enough,'" *Christian News Wire Web Site*, n.p. [cited 12 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/56609176.html. Schlueter, Co-host of Crosstalk Radio Talk Show, believes Driscoll's "crass" methods have "crossed a line of acceptable conduct for an evangelical pastor." She writes, "For generations, Christian pastors have managed to convey Scripture's teachings on fornication, adultery and the beauty of sexuality within marriage without sullying and cheapening it, Driscoll-style. Mark Driscoll is a sad product of our times. While waving his orthodox doctrinal credentials, he has simultaneously embraced the spirit of the age when it comes to his treatment of sex." See also Mark Kelly, "Driscoll's Vulgarity Draws

response to such a concern typically brings forth a grin and a return jab aimed at bloggers who he would argue have way too much time on their hands blogging criticisms in their pajamas from the basement of their momma's house.[129] However, not all criticism is being fired off from the underground blogosphere.[130] John MacArthur represents one example of an evangelical heavyweight who has publicly entered the homiletical arena to fight the good fight (1 Tim 6:11–12) for the gospel by contending against the *missio*-homiletical methodology (not soteriology) used by Driscoll.[131] So what exactly do critics of Driscoll's style claim is the problem?

MacArthur takes direct aim at Driscoll in laying out five concerns in "Counterculture's Death-Spiral and the Vulgarization of the Gospel" written for *Pulpit Magazine*.[132] First, he works to dispel the notion that pastors must "speak the language of contemporary counterculture" in order to "minister effectively" (Jas 4:4).[133] He despises and refutes adamantly such a philosophy that "assumes following society down the Romans 1 path is a valid way

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Media Attention," *Baptist Press Web Site*, n.p. [cited 12 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=29852.

[129] See Driscoll, "Convergent Conference Lecture."

[130] Blogosphere "is a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections . . . as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities) or as a social work." See Wikipedia, "Blogosphere," Wikipedia Web Site, n.p. [cited 3 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://en.wikipedia .*org/wiki/Blogspace*. Internet blogs serve as an active networking tool in the emerging church.

[131] John MacArthur, "Counterculture's Death-Spiral and the Vulgarization of the Gospel," *Pulpit Magazine*, n.p. [cited 10 Jan 2007]. Online: http://www.sfpulpit.com/2006/12/11/grunge-christianity/. MacArthur writes that Driscoll's "soteriology is exactly right, but that only makes his infatuation with the vulgar aspects of contemporary society more disturbing."

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid. Cf. Nathan Busenitz, "Clarifying Harsh Language," *Pulpit Magazine*, n.p. [cited 10 Feb 2009]. Online: http://www.sfpulpit.com/2008/09/23/clarifying-words-about-harsh-language/. Busenitz writes, concerning Driscoll's "pomo bad boy language," that "cultural contextualization is often cited as a justification for this kind of language, but contextualization is never justifiable if it takes us beyond the bounds of New Testament propriety. Moreover, the true power of any ministry is found not in clever speech (1 Cor 1:17: 2:1-5), but in the faithful proclamation of the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:16)." This article provides a balanced view of the type (and situation) of harsh language Scripture calls for (Eph 5:11; 1 Tim 4:1,6; 2 Tim 2:25; Titus 1:9, 13, 3:10; Jude 8-13) with the type of harsh language it rejects (Eph 4:29; 5:3-4; Phil 4:8; Col 3:8). Insofar as Driscoll would limit his harsh language to the former, Busenitz would agree with his usage of it. See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Jesus*, 11, for an example of what Busenitz would deem homiletical foul play. Here Driscoll refers to the mother of Jesus being mocked for "claiming she conceived via the Holy Spirit" whereas "most people thought she concocted a crazy story to cover the 'fact' she was knocking boots with some guy in the backseat of a car at the prom." Cf. Steve Camp, "Driscoll-Mark's Hill Church: The Unbiblical, Sectarian, Cult of Personality," *Steve Camp Weblog*, n.p. [cited 12 Sept. 2008]. Online: http://stevencamp.blogspot.com/2008/02/Driscoll-Marks-Hill-Church-Unbiblical.html. Camp contends that Driscoll's preaching and writing methods are just another form of seeker-sensitive pragmatics to grow a church. He states that "the gospel doesn't need to be contextualized beloved, it just needs to be proclaimed (Roms.1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-5). Paul contextualized himself – was all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:19-23), but he never contextualized the truth."

to 'engage the culture.'"[134] Second, he offers discernment from a historical vantage point against the schemes of falling into Satan's pragmatic ploys in building the church. Third, he warns of the potential dangers of becoming "overexposed" to culture's "dark side," which can lead to spiritual sickness and weakened progress toward "authentic sanctification" (John 17:17–19).[135] Fourth, he throws a verbal punch against trivializing biblical truth as a result of wedding sound doctrine and wicked worldliness.[136] Finally, fighting for a biblical vision of cultural proclamation, he references Paul's simple declarative stand for truth at Mars Hill (no use of "Greek scatology to show off how hip he could be"—Acts 17) and a proper understanding of Christian persecution (John 15:18–19) in addition to maintaining a right attitude toward the world (John 17:14–16).[137]

MacArthur believes Driscoll's preaching epitomizes each of these concerns; so much so that he labels him the poster preacher for "post-grunge" homiletical ministry.[138] MacArthur notes that Driscoll's homiletical vocabulary and subject matter is often "tasteless, indecent, crude, and utterly inappropriate for a minister of Christ."[139] The preaching point is clear; MacArthur sees no place for scatological language as a common means to proclaim Scripture in order to be "culturally relevant."[140]

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[134] MacArthur, "Counterculture's Death-Spiral."

[135] Ibid. MacArthur states that "the lifestyle he models—especially his easygoing familiarity with all this world's filthy fads—practically guarantees that they will make little progress toward authentic sanctification."

[136] Ibid. MacArthur writes, "Even though you marry such worldliness with good systematic theology and a vigorous defense of substitutionary atonement, the soundness of the theoretical doctrine doesn't sanctify the wickedness of the practical lifestyle. The opposite happens. Solid biblical doctrine is trivialized and mocked if we're not doers of the Word as well as teachers of it."

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid. An important note of distinction needs to be made between Driscoll's use of culturally sensitive language for biblical proclamation and his actual stand against living a worldly lifestyle. Driscoll seems to often be misunderstood and mischaracterized on this point. E.g. Driscoll argues in *Vintage Church* that a missional church is to be "countercultural." See Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 234–37. The risk that MacArthur raises of going native as a result of being consumed with the culture is legitimate, which could lead to minimal sanctification. Caution is certainly warranted on this point. But this is not the goal of Mars Hill or the teachings of Driscoll. Driscoll's engagement with culture and the use of street language is strategically focused on communicating the gospel in a culturally appropriated form that represents the "most effective manner possible." Culture is not always the bad guy, so Driscoll might argue. The challenge resides in discerning what to reject, what to receive, and what to redeem. Driscoll's aim is to follow the example of Jesus who participated fully in culture yet never crossed the line into sin. See Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 142, 145, and 140, respectively.

Driscoll, the humorous, biblical concatenationist, and avid admirer of MacArthur's preaching ministry, no doubt would have welcomed this scriptural counsel, at least in theory if not in practice.[141] Driscoll, speaking to the disappointment that MacArthur chose not to contact him personally with his concerns, stated that "if somebody who's been serving Jesus faithfully for a long time has some helpful advice, I would welcome it, because I'm on my own. I don't have a denomination. I'm just making it up as I go by God's grace."[142] Solicited or not, many pastors have stepped forward to fulfill Driscoll's desire by offering their homiletical counsel, sometimes private, mostly public.[143]

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[141] Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 145. Cf. Collin Hansen, "Pastor Provocateur," *Christianity Today* (Sept., 2007): 49. The term concatenationists is meant to highlight Driscoll's extensive use of Scripture to connect or link his position to that of the Scriptures. E.g. See Mark Driscoll, "The Emerging Church and Biblicist Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Church* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 19–35, for his connecting over 700 verses to support his theological position on the trinity, atonement, and Scripture. "If in theory if not in practice" is not meant to imply Driscoll refuses to receive and implement biblical counsel from others. He has publicly gone on record to repent of inappropriate language/behavior that once he thought was cute but now considers damnable—as a result of embracing biblical counsel. See Kelly, "Driscoll's Vulgarity." However, he also refuses, as will be discussed in this section, to change some preaching methods that his critics find offensive, but he finds favorable, in proclaiming Christ in culture.

[142] Ibid., 146. Driscoll responded with the following analogy when asked how he handles such sharp criticism of his preaching ministry from mentors such as MacArthur. He sees mentors as people who place building bricks into his life. Even with mentors that may later turn on him, he remains grateful for the brick they laid into his life and ministry. The best bricks, remarked Driscoll, often come from critics. The initial blow of the brick thrown at him certainly stings, but it is nevertheless valued and incorporated into his wall. This analogy was recorded as personal notes of this author as an attendee at the Sept. 21–22, 2007 *Convergent Conference* at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[143] See Driscoll, *Vintage Church*, 89–90, for Driscoll's record of private counsel given to him by Rick Warren. If Lloyd-Jones were alive today, he might counsel Driscoll about the lessons learned from Woodbine Willie's approach to contextualization. Woodbine Willie, a famous English clergyman, gained his fame as a chaplain by inculturating himself with the men of war. He took up smoking the cheap cigarette brand of the enlisted men ("Wild Woodbine") in addition to picking of their language of swearing—all as a means to win them to the gospel. The understanding being, writes Lloyd-Jones, "If you want to win men you have to use their language and you have to be like them in every respect." Woodbine Willie's popularity grew extensively and at the close of the Second World War, he began teaching other preachers his methods around the country. Many pastors adopted his approach. Lloyd-Jones's closing remarks to this story provide his potent counsel: "But the verdict of history on this was that it was a complete failure, a temporary 'stunt' or 'gimmick' that achieved notoriety for a while but soon entirely disappeared from the thinking of the church But it had a great temporary vogue."

Turning the discussion to Jesus, Lloyd-Jones then explains that it was His being different from others/culture, His purity, holiness and love that drew people like the sinful woman in Luke 7 to Him. He concludes, "This idea that you are going to win people to the Christian faith by showing them that after all you are remarkably like them, is theologically and psychologically a profound blunder." This wisdom combined with his counsel to be "contemporary" (see footnote 155) reflects some of the same ongoing challenges facing Driscoll, Kimball, and the revisionists in finding the balance of choosing language and methods that engage the culture for Christ while honoring the message and person of Christ. See Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 139–40.

John Piper, another Reformed pastor admired by Driscoll, also delivered a public homiletical jab that must have stung just a bit.[144] Josh Harris captured the essence of Piper's words in what he refers to as "warm pastoral adjustment and correction."[145] Harris states, paraphrasing Piper's instructive words given at the *2006 Desiring God Pastor's Conference* on "The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World":

> A pastor cannot be clever and show Christ as glorious. Mark Driscoll, you are clever. You have an amazing ability to turn a phrase and make statements that draw people back week after week. But it's dangerous. So many pastors will see you and try to imitate you and then try to watch all the movies and TV shows so they can try to be like you.[146]

Piper's concerned but gracious words sounded the same warning bell as MacArthur's and others since then.[147] Yet, based on Driscoll's preaching trends since these warnings have gone out, not much in the matter of scatological style seems to have changed; for

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[144] See Josh Harris, "Desiring God 2006: Day Two," *Josh Harris Web Site*, n.p. [cited 25 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://joshharris.com/2006/09/desiring_god_2006_day_two.php. The homiletical counsel given in the proceeding discussion was described by Josh as words that would "sting a little." Harris goes on to say that "the wounds of a friend are worth the sting. And that's definitely the spirit in which Piper delivered them."

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid. In Piper's reference of his statement about Driscoll, he refers to the statement by James Denny. Denny once said, "No man can give at once the impression that he himself is clever and that Christ is mighty to save." James Denny, *Studies in Theology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), 161, as quoted in Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 44. Cf. See John Piper, "The Supremacy of Christ and Joy in a Postmodern World," Sermon Audio, *Desiring God Ministries*, n.p. [cited 8 Mar. 2008]. Online: www.desiringgod.org/Events/NationalConferences/Archives/2006/. Piper also acknowledged criticism he received from an attendee of the conference who stated that Driscoll showed cleverness at the cultural level while Piper showed cleverness at the academic level. Of which Piper responded, "We are all in this danger together,"—and then reiterated his need for prayer. Cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 262, where he cautions against ways of "calling attention to self."

[147] Al Mohler addressed the current interest around the use of scatological language in preaching on his radio talk show, although without identifying specific preachers. He concedes the occasional use of it in Scripture, especially when, like Paul, it is referring to man's self-righteousness (Phil 3:8), or for an occasional "prophetic thrust" (1 Kgs 18:27). He also understands the missiological imperative to communicate the Bible in the common language of the day. In reference to Jesus, Mohler believes that He did use harsh language at times, but it was not scatological. One key concern raised by Mohler is that people develop an insensitivity to language, which creates a need for increased shock value in speech in order to have the same effect. Therefore based on biblical guidance such as Matthew 15:18, Ephesians 4:29; 5:4, 2 Timothy 2:16, and James 3, Mohler encourages preachers to let their *ethos* speak for them—letting the gospel be the offense, not scatological language, for the cross is offensive on its own. See Al Mohler, "Bad Language in the Pulpit?" *The Albert Mohler Radio Program*, n.p. [cited 25 Jan 2009]. Online: http://www.albertmohler.com/radio_show.php?cdate=2008-09-19.

some, it appears to be worsening.[148] So what is the driving ambition for staying the course with such controversial language and edgy

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[148] E.g. See Mark Driscoll, "The Peasant Princess Sermon Series: Let Him Kiss Me," *Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 10 Nov. 2008]. Online: www.marshillchurch.org/media/the-peasant-princess/let-him-kiss-me, where some critics of Driscoll disdain what they consider to be a "homosexual joke about the Lord." See Steven Camp, "The Guardian of Grunge and Seattle Sludge," *Steven Camp Blog Site*, n.p. [cited 15 Nov. 2008]. Online: http://stevenjcamp.blogspot.com/2008/09/guardian-of-grunge-and-seattle-sludge.html. Camp states, "Driscoll uses the Lord Jesus Christ again as his punch-line. It's not funny anymore – repent." Cf. also Cathy Mickels, "Mark Driscoll: Is He Qualified to Lead?" *Christian World View Web Site*, n.p. [cited 29 Jan. 2009]. Online: http://thechristianworldview.com/tcwblog/archives/1640, who documents examples of what she considers to be Driscoll's controversial language which includes extensive quotes from John MacArthur. Cf. Kelly, "Driscoll's Vulgarity."

Change would be relative concerning Driscoll's use of scatological language and preaching content based on the given evaluator. He has observed changes over the years while openly confessing his conviction over past mistakes—having gone too far with his language at times knowing that he has "crossed the line" and will have to live with those words for a lifetime. See Mark Driscoll, "How Sharp the Edge? Christ, Controversy, and Cutting Words," *Desiring God Web Site*, n.p. [cited 3 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/ConferenceMessages/ByDate/2008/3261_Ho.

The challenge Driscoll faces from those who disagree with his methods is what they might perceive as disingenuous confession. In a sermon on why he uses humor in preaching, after extensive use of edgy and humorous content for over an hour, Driscoll then stated, "I do cross the line" so "please forgive me when I do." It appeared, although maybe not intentional, that this was more of a confession along the lines of "I will purposefully cross the line in the future." In this message Driscoll stated (regarding his humor, not Scripture), that there are two types of people; people he has offended by his preaching and people who have never heard him preach. See Mark Driscoll, "Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions: Question 8 – Humor," *Mars Hill Church*, n.p. [cited 10 Nov. 2008]. Online: www.marshillchurch.org/media/religionsaves/humor. Driscoll's purposeful aim at offending people with humor represents a unique approach—one not used by many pastors. E.g. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix counsel that "if you are going to take advantage of anyone in your humor, be sure it is yourself." See Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 248.

Some argue that Driscoll could benefit from using more notes in preaching in order to, in the words of Camp, "stay on track, avoid . . . scatological needless humor, and preach with more insight, depth, and focus." See Camp, "The Guardian of Grunge." Granted this may distract from his unique gifting, as some would argue, but it also might add biblical balance to his making things up "on the spot." He says himself he "would not commend anyone to preach this way as it's the pastoral equivalent to driving blindfolded—exciting but dangerous." See Mark Driscoll, "Preaching Notes," Josh Harris Web Site, n.p. [cited 1 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://www.joshharris.com/2008/09/preaching_notes_mark_driscoll.php.

Driscoll's extemporaneous style of delivery has much in common with Fred Lybrand's view and instruction for preaching. See Fred Lybrand, *Preaching on Your Feet: Connecting God and the Audience in the Preachable Moment* (Nashville: Broadman, 2008). His basic premise is captured in three phases: 1. study the passage or topic thoroughly; 2. strategize your approach; and 3. set your heart and mind to preach. This approach, which he argues for from an historical homiletical tradition and biblical precedent, does carry with it the greater likelihood of saying something foolish, writes Lybrand. But, he adds, "You are also more likely to say something incredibly noteworthy in the inspiration of the moment" (150). Therefore, although some may not agree with Driscoll's approach, which he describes as "I study a ton going in to fill up, and then get up and preach it out" (see Driscoll, "Preaching Notes"), he nevertheless is not paving a new homiletical trail with this method. Rather, he is walking the same path as his admired preaching hero Charles Spurgeon, who, like Driscoll, also received his fair share of criticism. What was once said of Spurgeon—"His style is that of the vulgar colloquial, varied rant. . . . All the most solemn mysteries of our holy religion are by him rudely, roughly and impiously handled. Mystery is vulgarized, sanctity profaned, common sense outraged and decency disgusted. . . . His rantings are interspersed with coarse anecdotes that split the ears of groundlings; and this is popularity! this is the 'religious furor' of London"—could easily be (or

pop-culture humor, which contrasts the counsel of some of his most admired mentors and is considered even too racy for God Tube to post?[149]

Driscoll's Pauline-like toughness (Acts 14:19–22), evidenced by his refusal to not tap out after having received such critical homiletical blows,[150] resides in his missional passion to reach Seattle with the gospel, which he believes "demands new, creative ways to engage the city."[151] Like missionaries on foreign soil who study the people and the culture, Driscoll sees himself as a missionary to Seattle. He therefore has no trouble wearing the same clothes, speaking the same words, and listening to the same music—all for the sake of the gospel that he "might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22).[152] With an Augustinian-City of God vision, underscored

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has been) said of Driscoll today (31–32). Other *extempore* preachers in Lybrand's honor roll include, Augustine, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Wesley, Whitefield, Broadus, Morgan, and Truett, which puts Driscoll in not such bad company (55–66).

[149] Worthen, "Who Would Jesus Smack Down." God Tube is a family friendly, video-driven Christian social network where "users can explore their faith and the tenets of Christianity." See online: www.godtube.com. Mars Hill church posts some sermon video clips under the guise of a MH-17 adult-only rating. Driscoll notes in one of these clips that the material falls "into two categories: offensive and really offensive." See Mark Driscoll, "Q & A Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions," *Mars Hill Web Site*, n.p. [cited 20 Nov. 2008]. Online: http://marshillchurch.org/media/religionsaves/birth-control/live-q-a.

[150] This is not to imply that the homiletical critique given to Driscoll was meant to damage his ministry—although he does believe that some of his critics may be out for personal victory and glory. Even so, he continues to admire men like Piper, C. J. Mahaney, and Gary Breshears who he says show "love and hope" for him. "They will criticize me," he writes, "but it's so that I can be more like Jesus, and not so that they can glory in their victory." See Driscoll, "How Sharp the Edge?"

[151] Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 146. Cf. Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 142.

[152] Ibid. Cf. Driscoll, "Humor." In this sermon Driscoll defends his missiological use of humor from a biblical standpoint concluding that he has no reservations about being a fool for Christ in order to draw people in to hear about the person and work of Jesus. Comedy is a language postmodern people speak; Driscoll speaks this language with purposeful *pathos* and perspicuity. See Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 167–69, for a supportive discussion on the use of humor in preaching to postmoderns. Johnston writes, "'As much as it is in your power, be funny.' Humor communicates insightfully and winsomely in a way that postmodern listeners will find both attractive and compelling" (169). Cf. Richard Ramesh, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 133; Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 246–49, for positive insights on how to use humor in preaching. One caution by Vines and Shaddix is to "avoid beginning your message with detached humor" (246). Cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching*, 262–63. The following material presents an example when this counsel might have aptly applied to Driscoll's use of humor. In a preaching series on Nehemiah, he began a sermon introduction with a joke about a celebrity sports figure that some might consider over the line. When the crowd responded with surprise at his remark, he stated, come on you know that is why you come. He then proceeded to lead in prayer asking for the Spirit's blessing on his message. The exchange and timing of this joke seemed awkward at best, if not inappropriate. See Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 38, for the joke in question.

Two vintage statements of caution about humor might also be appropriate for this discussion. First, John Broadus warned that calculated humor or amusement "is felt to be incompatible with a genuine seriousness and solemnity" in preaching. Second, John Kelman, in

by Jeremiah's countercultural kingdom living (Jer 29:4–9), Driscoll preaches, in his own words, to see a city raised up within a city where

> Jesus rules above all, men are called to lead in masculine love, women are cherished, heterosexual marriage is honored, sex is celebrated but only within marriage, children are a blessing, and an alternative vision of life is offered in love and hope of attracting the city to consider a countercultural way of life with Jesus and his people.[153]

To accomplish this aim, Driscoll, the Seattle missionary, contextualizes his gospel preaching by allowing his context—with *The Text* and its boundaries—to dictate his chosen methodology.[154] When it comes to his choice of controversial words, Driscoll pleads his case for culturally appropriated contextual language as evidenced with Old Testament prophets who guarded the Israelites from Baal worship, the apostle Paul who contended against the Judaizers, and Luther who took the fight to the Papists.[155]

Driscoll calls pastors to model the same methods by contending for the gospel in their own cultural context.[156] And when looking to other shepherds, he warns of first considering their *sitz im leben* so that as you pray for them you will "judge them by

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similar regard to Broadus, offers these words of caution, "Humour is admissible in preaching, and it may be one of the finest and most penetrating swords of the Spirit. . . . Yet an awful doom awaits that preacher who allows his sense of humour to master him, and to leave itself upon the memory of the congregation as the main impression of his work." See John Broadus and John Kelman, quoted in Batsell Barrett Baxter, *The Heart of the Yale Lectures* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 285. Cf. John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 57–59, for Piper's assessment of Spurgeon who he believed offered a healthy balance between humor and gravity in preaching, which might also be said of Driscoll.

[153] Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 235–37.

[154] It is important to be reminded that Driscoll's shifting methodology does not apply to his theology. In *Death by Love* he writes "that we in no way seek to be theologically innovative, because theological innovation is inevitably the road to heresy." See Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 12. For further insight to Driscoll's methodological approach to preaching, which contrast sharply with the revisionist, see Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 91–96.

[155] Driscoll, "How Sharp the Edge?"

[156] Ibid. Cf. Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 144, where he argues this case based on the contextualization of the gospels. He writes, "Each Gospel is written to both contend for the truth of the person and work of Jesus and to contextualize that truth to varying cultural groups so that the gospel is most easily understood by people in that culture. This explains why Matthew was written primarily to Jews by a Jew . . . and John was written to Greeks. They each tell the same truth, but with different emphases, language, and style, thus doing all they can to 'win more of them . . . for the sake of the gospel,' as Paul commands."

their context, not by your context."[157] Seeking first to understand the shepherd's situation, or ministry *milieu*, may just unfold the reasons behind their tactics. Each cultural context will vary and therefore choice of homiletical methods (language and humor) for the body of Christ and non-Christians will also vary if effective contextualization is to take place.[158]

At the 2008 Desiring God Pastor's Conference, Driscoll's message, *How Sharp the Edge? Christ, Controversy, and Cutting Words*, aimed at providing a biblical defense for such diverse language—sometimes sharp, edgy, humorous, and hard. Feed the sheep, yes; be kind to the sheep (Eph 4:32), yes, argues Driscoll. But understand the distinction between sheep and wolves (and cultural context) that demands diverse language in order to deal with them (and cultures) differently. Rebuke the swine—using bad words and satire when necessary (Isa 3:16–24; Amos 4:1; Ezek 23:18–21), shoot the wolves—calling them fools if need be (Matt 23:13, 16–21, 23–24; Phil 3:2; Gal 5:11–12) and bark at the dogs—by engaging in purposeful mockery, when appropriate (Isa 64:6; 1 Kgs 18:26–27; Phil 3:7–8), presents Driscoll's biblical justification for scatological, harsh, edgy, and prophetic word-crafting, at least in part, for proclaiming truth in an emerging culture.[159]

Incorporating each of these facets of homiletical means, contends Driscoll, is to be done with the aim of speaking biblical truth in a biblical, contextual, seeker-sensible, and relevant way.[160] A way or method that takes the gospel *far enough* in order to engage, penetrate, and challenge the hearts and minds of people in culture; yet doing so without becoming worldly or "falling into the pitfall of

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid., 143. Richard asserts that "there are no good sermons that are generic to every audience. 'Long-distance' shepherding is neither biblically approved nor congregationally appreciated." See Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 79. Cf. Lloyd Jones, *Preaching*, 136–38. Lloyd-Jones argues against traditionalists or legalists who refuse flexibility with the "form of presentation," while content stays constant. E.g. he writes of the foolishness of speaking like the Puritans as if one lived in the seventeenth century. Rather, he believes "that it is always our business to be contemporary; our object is to deal with the living people who are in front of us and listening to us." Camp disagrees with Driscoll's Seattle contextualization of the Word. He writes, "Seattle doesn't dictate the standard for local church ministry, the Scriptures do." See Camp, "Driscoll – Mark's Hill Church."

[159] Driscoll, "How Sharp the Edge?"

[160] Driscoll does not believe in making the Bible relevant but rather teaching how the Bible is already relevant. See Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 144–46, for how he defines "seeker-sensible, which differs sharply from seeker-sensitive. Driscoll provides the example of 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul commanded the church to speak in "intelligible words . . . so that lost people could comprehend and be saved" (144).

liberal syncretism."[161] This approach contrasts not going *far enough* (fundamental sectarianism) where then the sheep, the wolves, the dogs, and the swine, unfortunately, and as Driscoll warns "cowardly," all get fed the same way. This hurts the church and fails to produce much fruit.[162] Driscoll, desiring to produce fruit, not simply provide a hip "makeover to the Puritans in order to promote cool Calvinism," stands by his methods, which he believes models the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of great missionaries like Paul and Calvin. Both these preachers, he argues, contended and contextualized in culture for the sake of the gospel so that many people would be saved and many churches would be planted.[163]

So who is right? Who is wrong? Based on biblical arguments from both sides, not pragmatism, yet choosing not to ignore acknowledging the many transformed lives at Mars Hill, as a result of God's Spirit working through the preaching ministry of Driscoll,[164] maybe a biblical middle ground exists for the cause of Jesus Christ and the advancement of His glorious kingdom in Seattle and beyond.

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[161] Driscoll, "How Sharp the Edge"; Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 140–43.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Driscoll, "The Church and the Supremacy of Christ," 146–7. As of February 2009, Mars Hill Church averages 8,000 people per Sunday services spread across seven campuses. The Acts 29 Church Planting Network currently has over 200 churches. The goal is 500 churches in the next three years and 1,000 church plants in the next ten years with an attendance of 250,000. See Mark Driscoll, "I Need Nine Hundred Men: Calling All Potential Church Planters and Multi-Site Campus Pastors," *Mars Hill Weblog*, n.p. [cited 11 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://blog.marshill.org/2009/02/11/i-need-nine-hundred-men-calling-all-potential-church-planters-and-multi-site-campus-pastors/.

[164] Evidence of changed lives can be observed through online testimonies at the Mars Hill church blog site. See Mars Hill, "Changed by Jesus," *Mars Hill Blog Site*, n.p. [cited 2 Feb. 2009]. Online: http://blog.marshillchurch.org/category/changed-by-Jesus/. These testimonies highlight both personal salvation and sanctification—such as young men and women coming to Christ, repenting of sexual immorality, embracing a new countercultural lifestyle (abstinence), and uniting in marriage to glorify God. Cf. Driscoll and Breshears, *Death by Love*, 37–253, for life transformation stories. Transformed lives have also been affirmed through personal interviews with attendees at Mars Hill. One security guard of the Mars Hill Staff shared that if it was not for Driscoll's preaching Jesus he would probably not be alive. "Driscoll loves Jesus," claims the people of Mars Hill; it appears that his preaching this great love for and of Jesus is being used by God to multiply lovers of Jesus in Seattle, Washington. These latter comments are taken from personal notes as a visitor of Mars Hill Church. The evidence above would seem to belie some critics concerns about limited sanctification. Cf. Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed*, 146–7, for additional evidence of transformed lives among women. Many young women of Mars Hill Church, instead of pursing social careers and youth pastorates, are now focusing on being loving wives and stay at home mothers.

This author personally experienced the working of the Holy Spirit through the preaching ministry of Driscoll while in attendance at Mars Hill. After the Word had been proclaimed expositionally, the Spirit led this author to pray diligently for the salvation of my son.

Conclusion

This homiletical critique of the relevants concludes at a little more than half the amount of material as that of the revisionists. What could be the reason for the imbalance? As stated in the opening of this final section, all four emerging church pastors would be evaluated based on an orthodox view of the Christian faith and an expositional view of preaching. Since the revisionists's stream revealed contrasting positions on both these fronts, their critique required an orthodox and expositional response. Since the relevant stream revealed more of a unified front with orthodoxy and expositional preaching, a second review of this position was unnecessary and thus the reason for the seemingly unbalanced critique, at least in volume. While the revisionists mostly presented preaching traits to avoid—if aiming for an orthodox, traditional understanding of biblical proclamation—the relevants have presented preaching traits to apply, but with appropriate discernment.

CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSION: PREACHING AND THE EMERGING CHURCH: IMPLICATIONS FOR EVANGELICAL (EXPOSITORY/TEXT-DRIVEN) PREACHING

This work has sought to provide a comprehensive, albeit selective, description and analysis of the role of preaching within the emerging church in light of biblical revelation. To accomplish this task, a three-part approach was undertaken. Part one provided an overview of the emerging church movement in addition to introducing four of its primary leaders. Part two described the homiletical ministries of these four preachers concerning their message (theology), mentality (philosophy), and methods. Lastly, part three offered a biblical assessment of each preacher's homiletical ministry with the aim of identifying preaching wisdom in addition to potential warnings.

The overall objective for these three areas of homiletical research has resided in two ultimate goals. First, that the material presented would provide pastors a useful tool by which to discern the value of the homiletical counsel emanating from the emerging church. The homiletical criteria for this assessment was based on the biblical pattern and precepts that support expositional preaching, which by nature seeks to glorify God, exalt and exult in the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit.[1]

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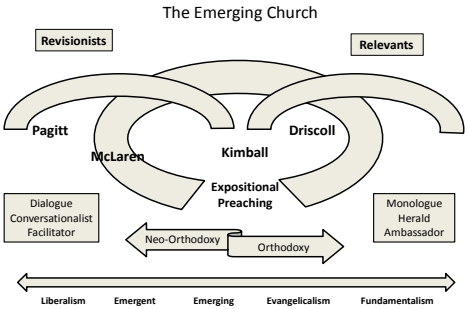
[1] See the work John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), for a description of this type of biblical preaching that is based on three basic tenets. First, the goal of preaching is the glory of God. Second, the ground of preaching is the cross of Christ. And, third, the gift of preaching is the power of the Holy Spirit (7).

It has been outside the scope of this work to argue for the merits of expository preaching. However, see Shaddix for a brief explanation of the natural evolution of expositional proclamation based on the transition from preachers being responsible for revelation to that of explanation. He concludes his argument by stating, "Shepherds are no longer responsible for revelatory preaching but solely responsible for persuasive explanatory preaching. The default approach to preaching is simply to explain and apply what God has already revealed in His Word" (72). See Jim Shaddix, *The Passion Driven Sermon: Changing the Way Pastors Preach and Congregations Listen* (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 71-73. When preachers faithfully explain the Word, they faithfully reveal Christ (Matt. 24:27).

The second and final goal, presented here, is to provide contemporary implications for evangelical (expository/text-driven) preaching. Two concluding points will suffice. First, modeling the preaching ministry of the revisionists will lead to a diminishing of the role of traditional, evangelical (expository/text-driven) preaching. [2] Second, modeling the preaching ministry of the relevants will lead to delighting in the role of traditional evangelical (expository/text-driven) proclamation.

Figure 8: The Emerging Church and Expository Preaching



What significance do these two concluding observations have for the church? The former, having emerged from a low view of Scripture, leads to a culturally driven conversation concerning an unorthodox gospel. The latter, having emerged from a high view of Scripture, leads to a text-driven heralding of an orthodox gospel—one that Jude calls the church to "contend earnestly" for, knowing that it has been "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).[3]

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[2] Gary Gilley highlights the danger of churches moving away from preaching solid exposition of Scripture. This, he claims, is the means by which "false teachers have been able to gain traction within the evangelical community. . . ." He believes the emergent church (or revisionist team) represent such teachers who undoubtedly would not "identify themselves as the target of Jude's warning" (Jude 4). These false teachers, he writes, "do not see themselves as harming the body of Christ, but as delivering it." The only "safeguard" against such disastrous error in the church, he warns, "is a thorough knowledge of the Word of God." See Gary Gilley, *This Little Church Stayed Home: A Faithful Church In Deceptive Times* (Webster: Evangelical, 2006), 171. See appendixes 5, 6, and 7 for graphic illustrations emphasizing the role theology plays in influencing homiletical philosophy and methodology.

[3] See appendixes 8 and 9 for a graphic illustration of these conclusions. Credit for the visual concept of these graphs (see also figure 8) should go to Michael Patton, "Would the Real Emerger Please Stand Up?" *Reclaiming the Mind Website*, n.p. [cited 30 Aug. 2008]. Online: www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2008/08/will-the-real-emerger-please-stand-up/.

Furthermore, since it pleases God "through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21) and to establish the church as the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15),[4] preaching then is of grave importance to the culture and to the church.[5] As Piper states, "Preaching is God's appointed means for the conversion of sinners, the awakening of the church, and the preservation of the saints."[6] Therefore, choose wisely when discerning over the preaching counsel of the emerging church—for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the gospel, the edification of the church, and the advancement of His kingdom in the context of this emerging yet passing culture.[7]

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[4] John Stott interprets the structural imagery of 1 Timothy 3:15 in relation to the church and preaching on two fronts. First, as the ground or foundation, the church's preaching ministry has the responsibility of holding truth firmly "so that it does not collapse under the weight of false teaching." Secondly, the church's preaching, like the first century high columns of the temple of Diana, in Ephesus, which could be seen from a far distance, should "hold truth high, so that it is not hidden from the world." Holding truth firm, Stott adds, "is the defen[c]e and confirmation of the gospel" while "to hold it high is the proclamation of the gospel."[4] Stott concludes that "the church depends on the truth for its existence" while "the truth depends on the church for its defen[c]e and proclamation." Therefore, defending and proclaiming truth, through preaching, is a must for the preservation of the gospel and the church. See John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 105.

[5] See Piper, *The Supremacy of God*, 47-63, for a helpful challenge and call for preaching with gravity and blood-earnestness. Piper states, "When I preach the everlasting destiny of sinners hangs in the balance" (55). Cf. R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching In a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 61-64, for a theological discussion tying the earnestness of preaching to expositional proclamation. He writes, "Preaching is therefore always a matter of life and death. The people in our churches depend for their very lives on the ministry of the Word; therefore our preaching had better be nothing less—and nothing other—than exposition of the Bible. . . . The question that faces us as preachers is not how we're going to grow our churches or inspire our people. It is not even how we can lead them to live more faithfully than they did before. The question that faces us is: Are these people going to live or are they going to die (63)?"

[6] Piper, *The Supremacy of God*, 54.

[7] Stott's charge to younger pastors, specifically in light of the emerging church consisting of younger preachers, might provide an appropriate final word. He writes, "We should be praying that God will raise up a new generation of Christian communicators who are determined to bridge the chasm; who struggle to relate God's unchanging Word to our ever-changing world; who refuse to sacrifice truth to relevance or relevance to truth; but who resolve instead in equal measure to be faithful to Scripture and pertinent to today." See John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 144.

APPENDIX 1
SHIFTING VALUES IN APPROACH TO PREACHING
(KIMBALL)

Modern Church	Emerging Church
The sermon is the focal point of the worship service.	The preacher teaches how the ancient wisdom of Scripture applies to kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus.
The preacher serves as a dispenser of biblical truths to help solve personal problems in modern life.	The preacher teaches how the ancient wisdom of Scripture applies to kingdom living as a disciple of Jesus.
Emphasizes the explanation of what truth is.	Emphasizes the explanation and experience of who truth is.
The starting point is with the Judeo-Christian worldview (Acts 17:1-3).	The starting point is the Garden of Eden and the retelling of the story of creation and of the origins of man and sin (Acts 17:22-34).
Biblical terms like gospel and Armageddon don't need definition.	Biblical terms like gospel and Armageddon need to be deconstructed and redefined.
The scriptural message is communicated primarily with words.	The scriptural message is communicated through a mix of words, visuals, art, silence, testimony, and story.
Preaching in a worship service is the primary way one learns from the Scriptures during the week.	Preaching in a worship gathering is a motivator to encourage people to learn from the Scriptures through the week.
Preaching takes place within the church building during a worship service.	A lot of the preaching takes place outside of the church building in the context of community and relationship.

APPENDIX 2
PREACHING ASSUMPTIONS FOR EMERGING CHURCH PREACHERS (KIMBALL)

1. That you will prayerfully study and exegete the Scriptures to accurately [*sic*] communicate their meaning. More than ever, we need to "correctly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).
2. That when you preach, Jesus will be the ultimate focus of your sermons, and that you will not just be giving information about him but also tell people how to relate to and experience Jesus as his disciples (John 5:39).
3. That no matter what preaching style or method you may use, your goal is to see listeners' lives change so they can truly be ambassadors for Jesus (2 Cor 5:20) and messengers of kingdom living.

APPENDIX 3
FAITH DECISION PROCESS: MODERN VERSUS POSTMODERN (KIMBALL)

The modern mindset is most influenced by:

FACTS ➔ influence ➔ BELIEF ➔ influences ➔ BEHAVIOR

In the emerging culture we are seeing a shift to:

EXPERIENCE ➔ influences ➔ BEHAVIOR ➔ influences ➔

BELIEF

APPENDIX 4

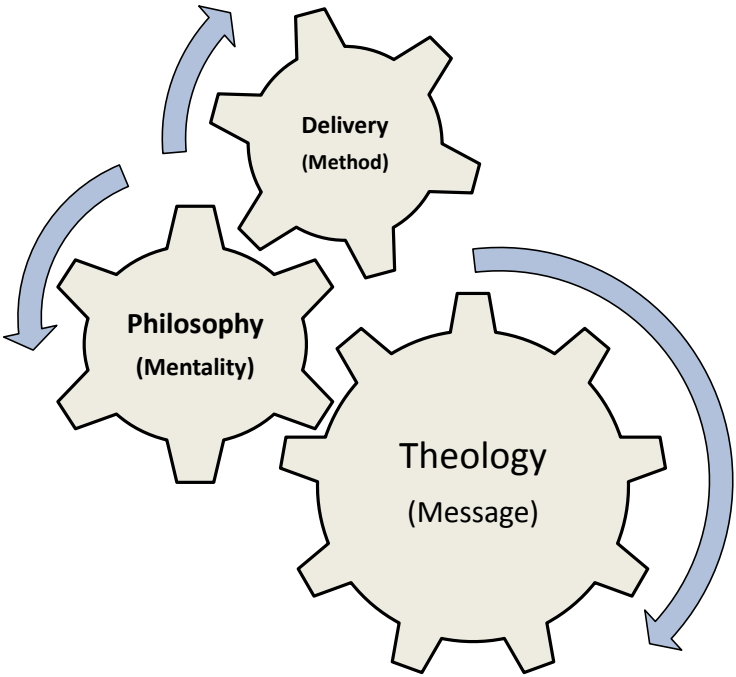
EMERGING CHURCH PREACHERS: HOMILETICAL TRAITS COMPARISON CHARTS

	McLaren	Pagitt	Kimball	Driscoll
HOMILETICAL MESSAGE	**The Bible** - Reasons for the Bible's poor reputation: It is wrongly understood as the foundational end all how-to manual for life being reduced to a divine storehouse of propositions, which depletes it of its intrigue and mystery. - The Bible is an inspired family story, not an authoritative story, which is a modern conception of 2 Tim 3:16-17. Authority resides with God and the community, not within the text/original author. - The primary problem with modern interpretation of Scripture is an over-realized hermeneutical fixation with analysis. A holistic interpretive approach presents the solution, which includes: seeing propositions from a missional/ action vantage point; embracing dialogue, conversation, and intrigue in the interpretive process (clarity is not the end all); seeing the big story and yourself in its ongoing trajectory; revering mysteries; listening to marginalized interpreters; and prizing the questioning of the Bible. **The Gospel** - Vacillates between the irreducible elements of the gospel (1 Cor 15) and the gospel as the kingdom of God—an inclusive social revolution of personal and global healing/transformation. The orthodox gospel position has been relegated to footnote status.	**The Bible** - Not to be understood or used as a literal weapon, reference book, encyclopedia, or memorized playbook. The aim is to guard against *eisegesis* and selective quoting of Scripture that ignores historical context and original communities of faith. -Rejects inerrancy and redefines the orthodox view of inspiration. Inspired Scripture projects the notion of God or hints of God speaking as an active voice in partnership with humanity, not the literal words of God. The Bible is to be understood as full narrative; each part is connected to the bigger story. - The community of faith represents the locus of biblical authority. Interpretive space is needed in order to reconstruct and live out the message/story for the emerging culture. **The Gospel** - Rejects orthodox gospel: doctrine of original sin and subsequent separation, God as judge over sin, Jesus as Savior from sin (propitiation), and substitutionary atonement. - Re-imagined gospel: uninterrupted integration and co-creation with God, down-and-in (personal) God, and Jesus as revolutionary who provides hope for a healed world of love and peace.	**The Bible** - Not to be understood as an answer-everything book, how-to-manual, textbook, or auto manual. Scorns proof-texting and interpretations void of historical context. - Three reasons for maintaining a conviction about Scripture: Jesus placed a high value on Scripture; the Scripture claims it is the means to know and love God; and Scripture is inspired. Therefore, Scripture is an authoritative guide for life—in like fashion to a compass. - The Bible is also like an anchor—secure and immovable on essential truths yet free to drift in areas of non-essentials. - Implements a hermeneutic of humility that acknowledges the reality of human error in interpretation and a hermeneutic with narrative lenses that places the interpreter within the big story—seeking to understand the cultural and historical context. **The Gospel** - Understands the pure gospel to be represented by 1 Cor 15: 3-4. Holds to an orthodox view of substitutionary atonement. - Holistic faith consists of eternal life and an invitation to experience life today.	**The Bible** - God's divine revelation to man. Inerrant, true, trustworthy, perfect, flawless—the very words of God. What the Bible says is what God says. - The purpose of Scripture is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. He is the centerpiece of Scripture; the thread that weaves it all together. Proper understanding of Scripture is how one comes to know and love Jesus. - The Bible is authoritative, the metaphorical Supreme Court of final authority. Lower courts of authority such as tradition, experience, and science are valued, yet placed beneath Scripture. Scripture is the best tool for interpreting Scripture and hermeneutical integrity is maintained by approaching the Bible from a grammatical, historical, and theological investigation of the text—seeking to discover the original intent of the author. **The Gospel** - It is the heart of Scripture. 1 Cor 15:1-8 provides the succinct message of the gospel—Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection to save sinners. - Mankind is sinful. God is holy, despises sin, and provides the means for forgiveness through the person and finished work of Jesus—substitutionary atonement.

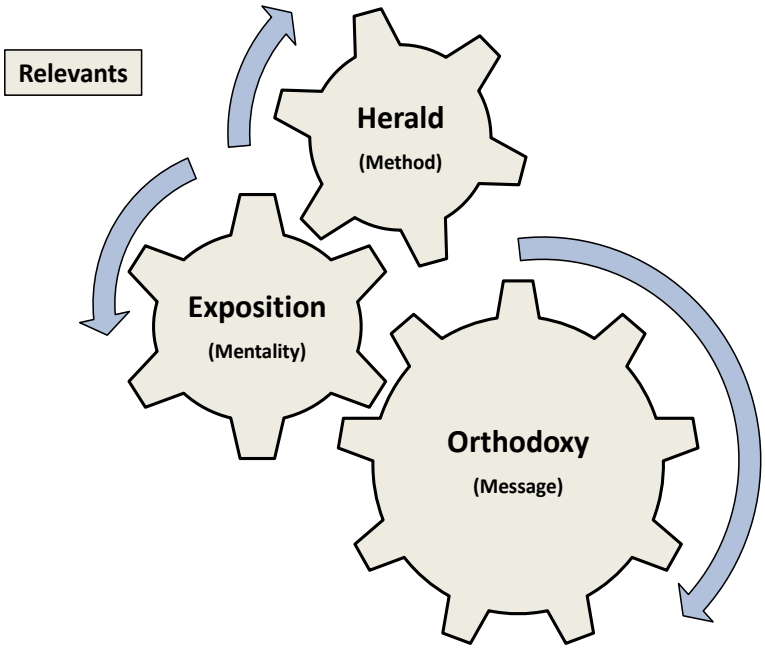
	McLaren	Pagitt	Kimball	Driscoll
HOMILETICAL MENTALITY	- The top preaching priority is to accommodate postmodernism, which requires a new rhetoric. Components of this new communication genre include: - Embrace mystery. Tone down certainty and claims of authority allowing space for skepticism, suspicion, and the unknown. - Represent a posture of humility, not an arrogant modern know-it-all answer man with pithy proof-text arguments. - Communicate with a *poetic voice*, which means taking the tone of a lover/ artist, not lawyer/salesmen. Speak with more intuition, wonder, awe, and wildness, instead of abstract, system-atic, scientific rhetoric. - Create a preaching environment for dialogue. Instead of imposing upon the listener, make the sermonic event a collaborative effort and/or communicate by mirroring the flow of a conversation. - Create experiences within the preaching event through the sharing of stories, meditation, and other lived/ practiced methods. - Community matters in preaching—it serves as the greatest hermeneutic and explanation for the gospel. - Art represents one primary way that postmoderns learn. Seek to preach incorporating music, drama, and visuals.	- Rejects traditional preaching; renames it speaching, the style of preaching that's hardly distinguishable from a one way speech. - Reasons for its dismissal: ineffective means of communication that creates a relationship problem with the audience, silences the voice of the community, and stifles experience and participation—the very means of spiritual formation for an emerging culture. - Re-imagines preaching as progressional dialogue where the content of the message is created within the context of community. - Implicatory preaching, which aims at allowing participants to see themselves in the unfolding story of God, replaces generic messages with assumed application points—an approach that does little to foster relationships. - A community dialogical approach to preaching loosens the control of the message from a predetermined few, allowing for new emerging messages from a community of preachers, not a single holder of truth.	- Places a high importance on preacher *ethos*—humility and dependence on God. Preaching is a critical part of the emerging church's mission. - Preaching is proclaiming the story of God and humans, the good news of the kingdom. Preachers need to become story tellers again. - The meta-narrative in proclamation matters. Sermons need to reflect how the particular text/subject fits into the grand narrative of the biblical story. - The starting point for preaching to a post-Christian/emerging culture is the beginning of the story, not the middle. - Preachers need to accommodate the postmodern mindset by providing biblical substance in sermons, biblical depth (word studies/ historical context) to challenging questions, teaching theology, returning to theocentric instead of anthropocentric proclamation, and aiming for experiencing God's truth instead of limiting it to propositional/ fill in the blank messages of His truth. - Define terms in preaching. Reconstruct Christian sub-culture terminology. Create space for learning by interaction and dialogue.	- Preaching is central to the church and the central aim (and content) of preaching is to exalt Jesus as the hero, Savior, and centerpiece of Scripture. - Expositional preaching, exposing and explaining the original meaning of the text, presents the best means to proclaim Christ. - Preach with authority by staying true to the text/authorial intent. - Preach by means of monologue, not dialogue, for the corporate worship gathering. Dialogical preaching stems from a low view of Scripture and a disdain for biblical authority. Welcome dialogue and interaction as part of small group Bible studies. - Preaching is linked to ecclesiology. The church exists because of preaching—God being the example from Genesis to Revelation. Therefore, a church without preaching is not a church. - Preaching is linked to missiology. Three missiological sermon framing questions include: Why do we resist the truth? Why does this matter? And, how is Jesus the hero/Savior? -Preach the Bible as The Story or metanarrative. Explain how each message fits within the grand story of redemption. Allow the genre of Scripture to determine sermon structure.

	McLaren	Pagitt	Kimball	Driscoll
HOMILETICAL METHOD	- Abductive preaching- seizing people through imagination and transporting them from their world to another world where they gain new insights/ perspectives. The aim is to compose experiences not sermon points and principles. The elements of surprise and unpredictability, by means of utilizing metaphors, problems, questions, puzzles, shock, and astonishing stories, are two key facets of this method. - Abductive-narrative proclamation- is story telling in an abductive way—in the way of Jesus. Three reasons for narrative methodology: it represents the best means to communicate truth to postmoderns, it focuses on honoring historical context, and it speaks the language of postmoderns. - Avoid versification. Do not strip-mine the text for abstract propositions to the neglect of the story/meta-narrative. Allow the trajectory of the biblical story to speak. Preach the grand movements of Scripture in the raw, uncut, unedited version. - Preachers share their stories to present illustrations of the truth. Communicate authenticity, honesty, and transparency. Incorporate art by showing movie clips, creating drama with biblical themes, and creating new art as part of the sermon event.	- Community based sermon preparation. Incorporates mid-week sermon discussion group for crafting the form, feel, and content of the message. - Delivers sermon in a roundtable forum. The audience is invited to share ideas, interpretations, and feelings about the message. Substantive changes in the message are created as a result of this interactive exchange during the sermonic event. - The preacher's role is to facilitate a proper environment for spiritual formation through community dialogue during the sermon. - Progressional methodology includes: setting the parameters for sermon discussion; establishing the right posture/tone of voice; developing an art for improvisation; discarding sermon notes to improve spontaneity, fluidity and openness toward participation; releasing authority to the community; and using provisional language to encourage group interaction. - Preaching is secondary to relationships lived out in community.	- Theotopical- a method that blends expository and topical preaching. Incorporates a defined theological theme expressed through a blending of propositional truth with a meta-narrative explanation of the biblical message. - Participatory-interactive-holistic teaching. The central Bible theme, emphasized through multi-sensory mediums (arts, visuals, testimonies, and prayer stations), takes center stage with the message preached with words in order to create multiple experiences for learning, transformation, and ultimately encountering God. This holistic method is also referred to as wordless preaching. - Create space for dialogue. This allows for sermon interaction, questioning, and thinking in context of community. Dialogue opportunities might include: open forums following the sermon, group think tanks to deal with difficult passages/biblical topics, and e-mail discussions. - Incorporate inclusive language ("we" instead of "you") in preaching. This models the preacher being on journey together with the church instead of merely being the message giver and problem solver.	- Preaching methods change, doctrine remains unchanged. A culturally appropriated message requires a culturally articulated form. - Expositional proclamation, explaining what is in the text line by line and chunks at a time (typically preaching through entire books of the Bible) represents the overarching method, which can be expressed in different forms such as textual, topical, and narrative. Regardless of the form, an expositional mentality must be maintained—seeking to honor and explain the authorial intent in context. - Sermon length averages one hour, typically without notes. - Conversational preaching. Connect in a personal way without loosing a prophetic edge. Be transparent; acknowledge personal sins and areas of struggle. Understand the language of the culture in order to effectively communicate. - Use confrontation for the purpose of challenging people to deal with truth. Be deliberate, tenacious, and pointed. - Use comedy to gain attention, teach, and persuade people about Jesus. Engage people with the gospel by utilizing your individual personality/ gifts.

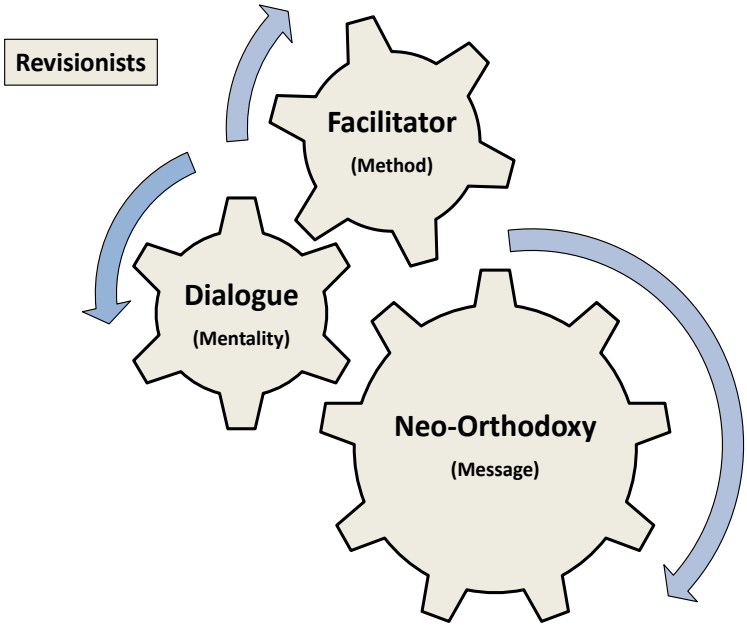
APPENDIX 5
HOW THEOLOGY INFLUENCES HOMILETICAL PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY



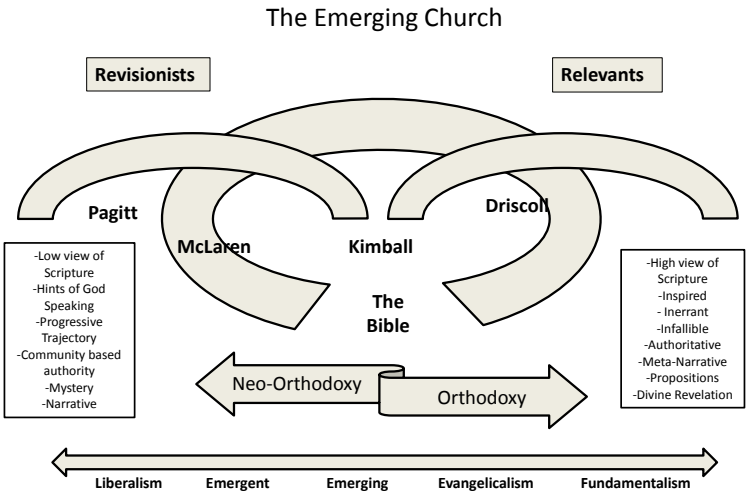
APPENDIX 6
RELEVANTS: HOW THEOLOGY INFLUENCES
HOMILETICAL PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY



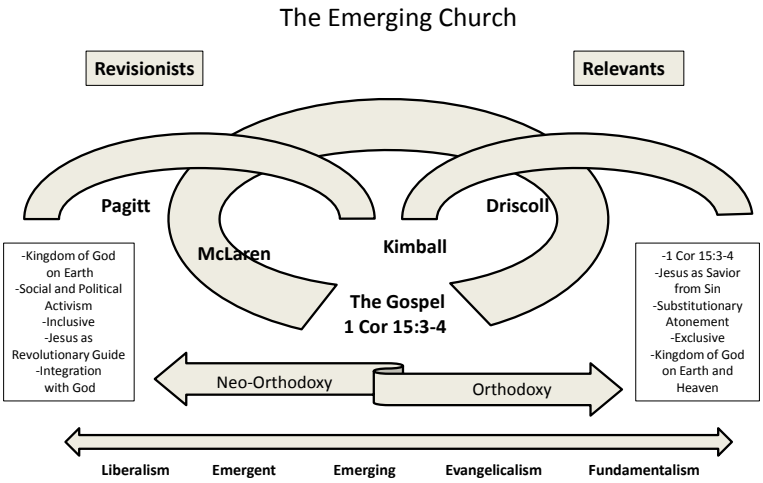
APPENDIX 7
REVISIONISTS: HOW THEOLOGY INFLUENCES
HOMILETICAL PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY



APPENDIX 8
THE EMERGING CHURCH AND THE BIBLE



APPENDIX 9
THE EMERGING CHURCH AND THE GOSPEL



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