

# What About ... the Emergent Church

BY DR. DAVID A. DEWITT

*Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate (Revelation 2:6).*

We do not know who the Nicolaitans were, except they were false teachers who were deceiving much of the early church. Every book of the New Testament, except Philemon, warns about false teachers. It's a huge part of the apostles' teaching. One of today's most influential groups of false teachers, one of our Nicolaitans, is the community known as the Emergent Village or the Emergent Church.

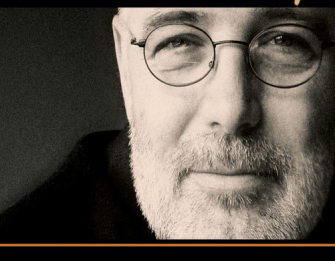
The Emergent Church began with Brian McLaren, and in 2007, he was the most read author by most pastors in the USA. So let's look at what he says, since his teaching is the foundation of the Emergent Church and the Emergent Village, and it's influencing many post-modern and seeker churches, both large and small.

## Brian McLaren's Emergent Christianity

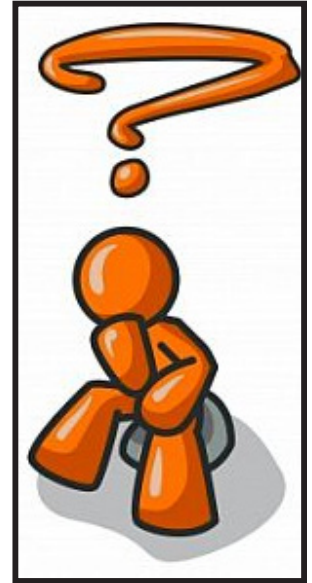
- McLaren says: "I believe people are saved not by objective truth, but by Jesus. Their faith isn't in their knowledge, but in God." **So, for McLaren, salvation is not based on knowledge or truth. It is based in some Jesus or God one believes in outside of the knowledge of truth.**
- For McLaren, carrying out the Great Commission, making disciples, means "to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish contexts." **So McLaren suggests one can learn about Christ in any religion.**
- McLaren says he knows "seven Jesuses: The Conservative Protestant Jesus, The Pentecostal/Charismatic Jesus, The Roman Catholic Jesus, The Eastern Orthodox Jesus, The Liberal Protestant Jesus, The Anabaptist Jesus, and The Jesus of the Oppressed." **McLaren seems to know denominational "Jesuses," but not the Jesus of the Bible.**
- McLaren describes the Emergent Church this way:

BRIAN D. MCLAREN

a Generous  
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"Think of a cross section of a tree. Each ring represents not a replacement of the previous rings, not a rejection of them, but an embracing of them." Then he goes on to explain that each ring is part of the historical development of Christianity. **His point is that Christianity is evolving, and we should em-**



**brace its evolution.** In a nutshell: **Emergent means evolution.**

- McLaren says: "Sin, in this model, can be understood as lower levels or rings resisting the emergence of higher levels or rings." That includes: "Bible exposition" and "Bible scholarship." **So Bible exposition and Bible scholarship are sinful because they hold Christianity to biblical standards and keep it from evolving.**
- McLaren also describes the Gospel as sin. He writes: "The first illustration of this virus/sin is that Christianity was reduced to being a story about how to get a personal Savior—how to get my personal soul into heaven rather than hell." He calls this "the virus of individualism." **So according to McLaren, the gospel message of personal salvation is a sinful virus.**

McLaren's approach to Christianity is one of historical evolution, not biblical truth. Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, the One we learn about in the Bible who really lived and died for our sin, is replaced by the name "Jesus." The idea of grace without repentance is common in the Emergent movement. Most Christians will say something like: "My church doesn't believe that, and my pastor doesn't believe that." Hopefully! But is your church becoming like that, or being influenced by that? If you don't hear the Gospel, if you don't hear much about sin, if the preaching does not develop a text of Scripture, if instead you hear words like "discussion," "tolerance," "acceptance," "grace" (without repentance), and "community," beware of the Emergent influence. [Evangelicals who have effectively and accurately criticized McLaren include John MacArthur, Norman Geisler, Ray Comfort, and D. A. Carson.]