

Leadership Foundation, Inc.

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Dear Co-Laborer,

As we begin the second half of this year, I pray this letter finds you well, doing well and experiencing God's gracious hand of blessing on your life. The Henrichsen clan is doing well, and I would appreciate your continuing prayer regarding the recent requests I shared with you.

DRIFTING TOWARDS DUMBNESS Part Three

In this third and last issue dealing with our Drifting Towards Dumbness I call attention to what is perhaps the saddest and most discouraging aspect of this drift: What it has done to most of the church in the western world.

In past issues of the Dear Co-Laborer letter I have called attention to the way the Emergent Church has captured the imagination of evangelical Christianity. By way of review, the Emergent Church is not an organization but a movement. For this reason, there exist as many variations of what they believe as there are adherents.

The movement has in common, however, the belief that God's revelation is dynamic rather than static. Just as how God led His people in the Old Testament differs from how He led the New Testament church, so also how He leads today differs from the New Testament. In the Old Testament He required dietary laws, sacrifice of animals, and special feast days. In the New Testament this was replaced by correct doctrine and commandments governing behavior. Today, however, God is leading His people differently. No longer is He concerned with dogma and behavioral restrictions. In their place He is saying that He wants tolerance, social justice, care of the less fortunate, and world peace.

For example, I find it ironic that the God of Scripture warns that all men face an eternal Judgment, while today Christians argue that God does not send people to hell. Instead, such people insist that God wants His followers to ensure temporal justice in the world – the exact opposite of what the Bible teaches.

According to the Emergent Church, in our post-modern world the "old-time religion" is irrelevant; people no longer live with that worldview. If we wish to reach these disenfranchised people, we must change the method and the message. If God is love, and if He wants His followers to emulate Him in loving others, then what is wrong with loving relationships involving fornication and homosexuality?

For example, Philip Yancey, an editor at large for “Christianity Today,” writes regarding his homosexual friend:

I don't agree with some of Mel's choices, but they are Mel's choices, not mine, and thus between Mel and God. I think back to Jesus and how offensive he must have found the people he dealt with; yet he treated them with respect, compassion, and love... Do I believe that gay people can be committed Christians? Absolutely. I know far too many of them to doubt that. I also believe that alcoholics and prideful hypocrites can be committed Christians. In short, sinners can, and I've stepped back from ranking other people's sins... It would be more accurate to say that I intentionally don't take sides on this issue... Do I agree with gay Christians' interpretations of the six passages in the Bible that may or may not relate to their behavior? No. They may be right, but so far I'm unconvinced. I also disapprove of sexual promiscuity, whether of the hetero- or homo- variety...

Jesus calls into question such muddled thinking when He says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments... He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me” (John 14:15, 21). God will not relate to a willful person!

In emergent churches doctrinal teaching is out and narrative is in. People wish to experience God, not be told they are sinners in need of repentance. “Do not bore me with your doctrine, show me your love!” Of course, such people insist on defining what love looks like. Thus, the church conforms to the expectations of the philosopher kings,^[1] so evident in academic institutions today.

Returning to Dostoevsky's “The Grand Inquisitor,” Ivan continues the monologue the Grand Inquisitor gives to Christ. I say, “monologue,” for at no time in the chapter does Christ respond to him, other than to kiss him at the end:

They will seek us (the church) again, hidden underground in the catacombs, for we shall be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us and cry to us, “Feed us, for those who have promised us fire from heaven haven't given it!” And then we shall finish building their tower, for he finishes the building who feeds them. And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us!... They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them – so awful it will seem to them to be free. **But we shall tell them that we are Thy servants and rule them in Thy name. We shall deceive them again, for we will not let Thee come to us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we shall be forced to lie...** Know that I fear Thee not. Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locusts, I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect, among the strong and powerful, thirsting ‘to make up the number.’ But I awakened and would not serve madness. **I turned back and joined the ranks of**

those who have corrected Thy work. I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble. What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, to-morrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For if anyone has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou. To-morrow I shall burn Thee.

The church ignores the commandments of Christ, His apostles and all of His teachings with which they disagree. I hear people say things like, “That biblical command simply does not speak to me.” They jettison biblical commandments not affirmed by conscience and reason, claim for themselves all the promises, and consider the propitious death of Christ “divine child abuse.” Gone are the days when children were expected to memorize Scripture and become biblically literate.

In return the church affirms the agenda of the intelligentsia, for after all, it sounds reasonable; the job of the church is to correct the perceived ills of society and to clean up the mess created by God when He unequally divided to people gifts, abilities, and opportunities.

According to the Bible, God never commissioned the church with such a task. For the Christian, the only reliable revelation of God is the Bible. If the believer is free to decide what parts of the Bible are true for him, then God becomes the creation of his own desires. Left without the precious promises of God, for after all we cannot rely on them anymore than we can rely on the New Testament for leadership regarding His will for our lives, that individual eliminates any reason for believing anything except what he wants to believe. Such a person is better off believing in Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Fairy Godmother.

G.K. Chesterton, in his provocative book Heretics, notes that yesteryear people were doubtful about themselves, but undoubting about truth. Today the opposite is the case; they are filled with self-confidence while being “intellectually helpless.” To call homosexual behavior wrong reveals intolerance, for each person defines truth for himself. Such people are exactly what the philosopher kings are seeking to create.

Pink Floyd has a famous song, in which the key line is “I have become comfortably numb.” In part, the lyrics read,

When I was a child
 I caught a fleeting glimpse
 Out of the corner of my eye
 I turned to look but it was gone
 I cannot put my finger on it now
 The child is grown,
 The dream is gone.
 I have become comfortably numb.

Paul, in his famous dissertation on love in 1Corinthians 13, notes some of the characteristics of love, such as, “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in

the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,” and then adds, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” Children tend to be easily distracted and preoccupied with trivia.

Contrast this with the words of Pink Floyd’s song: The man, no longer a child, insists on acting like a child, dealing with adulthood by becoming “comfortably numb.” The Apostle Paul says that true men put away “childish ways” and begin thinking and acting like men.

It seems to me that the tragedy in all of this is, “We have become comfortably numb.” As long as we are fed, clothed, and free to pursue our appetites, we do not really desire to think. Happiness rather than holiness, experience rather than learning, feeling rather than thinking, entitlement rather than responsibility – this is what we crave.

A sense of entitlement is the enemy of gratitude, and ingratitude is the source of sin. Without gratitude, we cannot properly relate to God. It is dangerous for the soul to think we are owed anything in life. God is looking for a broken and contrite heart and a willingness to obey. Without these elements as the focus of our lives, from a biblical perspective, what hope do we have?

Walt

[1] You will remember that the philosopher king is Socrates’ solution to solving the problems of the world.