

The Emergent Church and Last Days Ecumenism

By Andy Woods

Adapted from Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone* and *Moody Handbook of
Theology* pps. 689-99

Some Emerging Church Leaders

- Brian McLaren
- Dan Kimball
- Leonard Sweet
- Doug Pagitt
- Robert Webber



The Present Generation

- Unique
- Postmodern
- Post Christian
- Disillusioned
- Multi-sensory
- Hungry for a spiritual experience



Paradigm Shift: Emerging Church

“New generations are arising all around us without any Christian influence. So we must rethink virtually everything we are doing in our ministries.” Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 13-14.



RELEVANCE

Tell Me What I Want to Hear
Or Else Shut Up and Go Away

EMERGENT-SEE
PO-MOTIVATORS
FOR EMERGING CHRISTIANS

Paradigm Shift: Emerging Church

“It's is time for a Post Modern Reformation... *Reinvent yourself* for the 21st century *or die.*”
Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 17, 75. (Italics added).



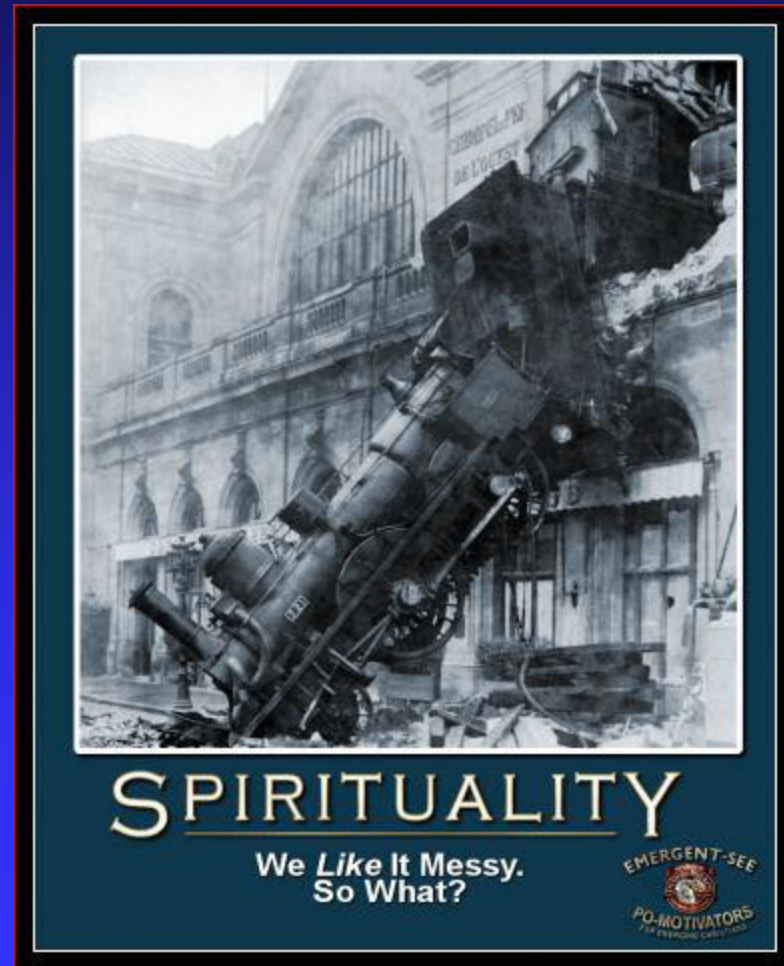
POSTMODERN

It's Our Word. Don't Use It. Don't Try to Define It.
Above All, Don't Label Us With It.
Even If We Apply It to Ourselves.



Six Areas of Redefinition

- Missions
- Knowledge
- Scripture
- Church
- Christ
- Prophecy



Apostasy is Internal

Acts 20:29-“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Italics added).



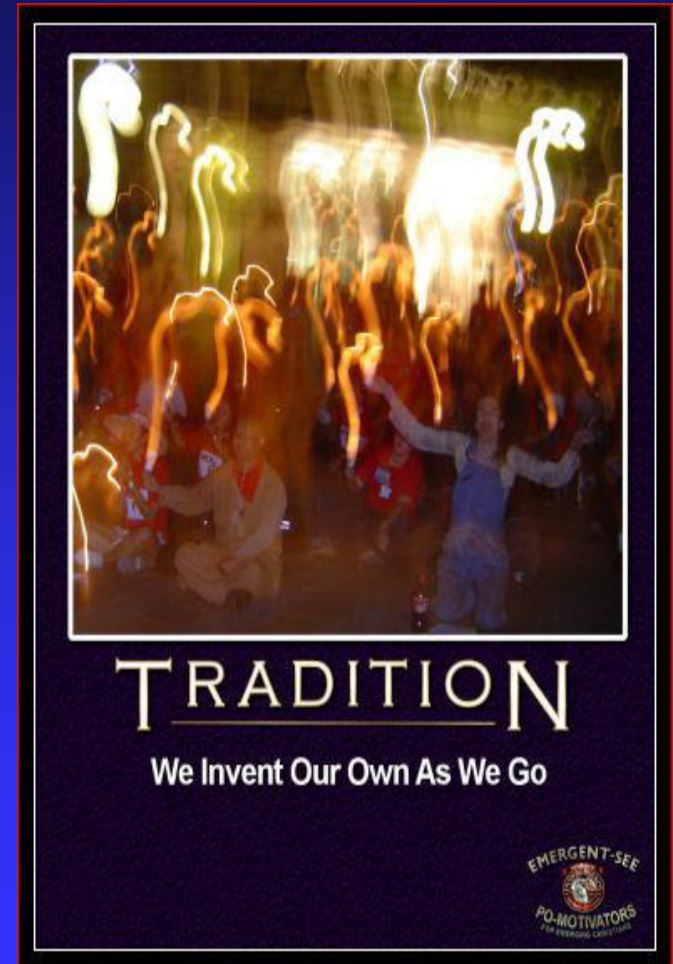


Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 121

“Modern thinkers want things very orderly and systematic because they learn in a logical and progressive manner. They prefer, generally, to sit and listen. Emerging post-Christian generations, on the other hand, long to *experience* a transcendent God during a worship gathering *rather than simply learn about him.*” (Italics added)

Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 121

“They want fluidity and freedom rather than a neatly flowing set program. They want to see the arts and a sense of mystery brought into the worship service, rather than focusing on professionalism and excellence. *This will shape how a worship gathering is designed*” (Italics added).



Biblical Missions: The Present Generation



- John 12:32
- The Gospel's power to penetrate the pagan mind and culture: Isa 55:10-11; Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 3:15

Emergent Missions: Alternative Religions



“I don’t believe making disciples must equal adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts” (Italics added). Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 260.



Emergent Missions: Alternative Religions

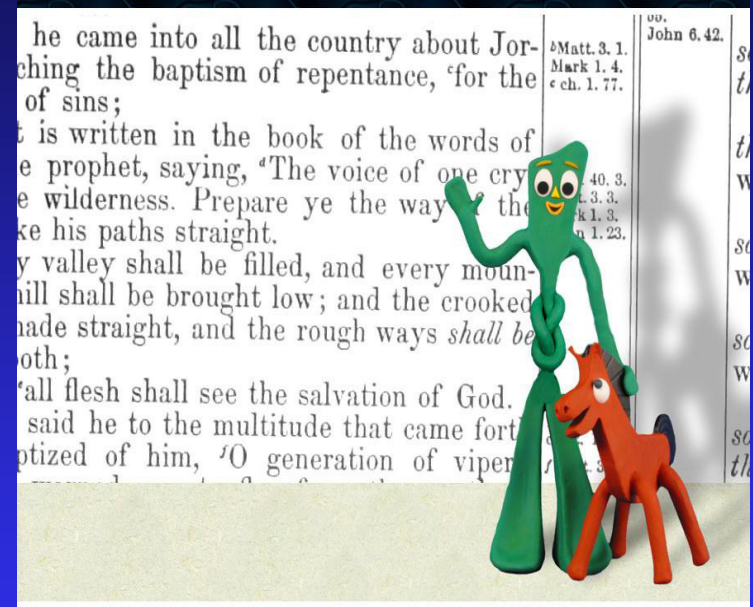
“*Evangelism or missions for me is no longer persuading people to believe what I believe*, no matter how edgy or creative I get. Its more about shared experiences and encounters. Its about walking the journey of life and faith together, each distinct to his or her own tradition and culture but with the possibility of *encountering God and truth from one another*” (Italics added).

Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 131.

Biblical Missions: Alternative Religions

Alternative religions? 2 Chr
13:9; Jer 2:11; Acts 19:26;
Col 1:13; 1 Cor 1:21;
10:19-20; Gal 4:8; Philip
3:4-8

Inclusivism? John 14:6;
Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5

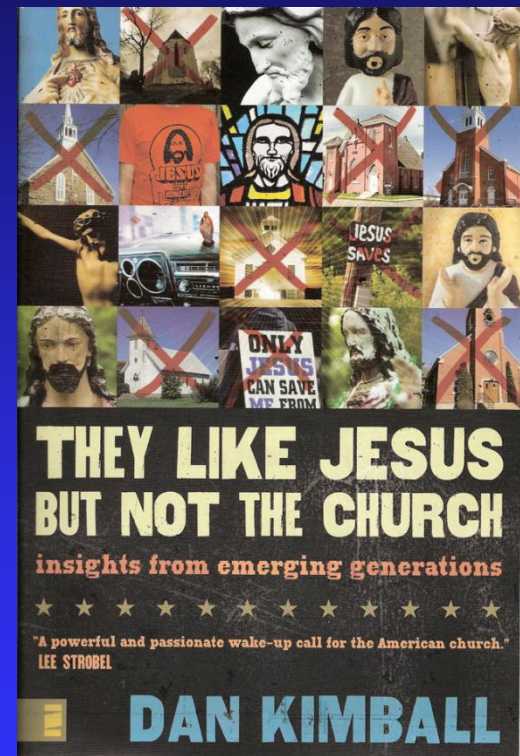


TEXTS

Wonderful, Bendable, Highly Amusing Toys

Emergent Missions: Non Confrontational Evangelism

“He (Jesus) stopped and asked questions of the Samaritan woman (John 4) and didn't just jump in and say, ‘Samaritans are wrong.’”

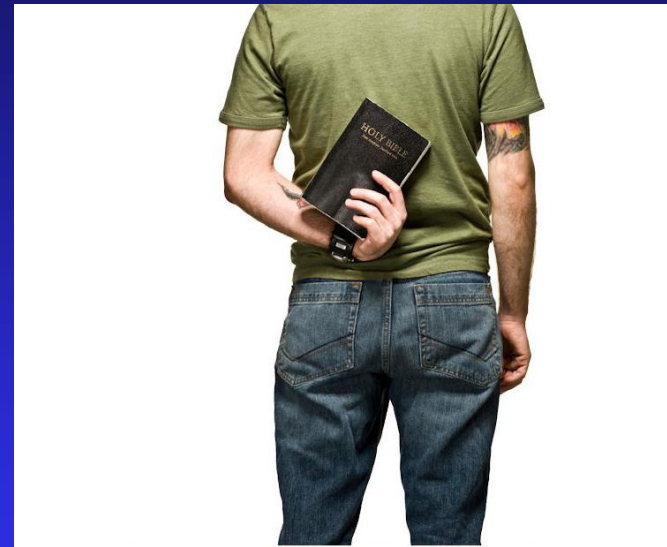


Dan Kimball, cited in Oakland, 46.

Biblical Missions: Confrontational Evangelism

- John 4:21-26

- Unkind to
unbelievers?



SENSITIVITY

The Bible intimidates people.
Besides, my tats and T-shirt
are clear enough.

Emergent Epistemology

“Isn’t truth often best understood in a conversation, a dialectic (or trialectic), or a dynamic tension? Isn’t it subverted by a tendency to “solarize”?”

Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 198



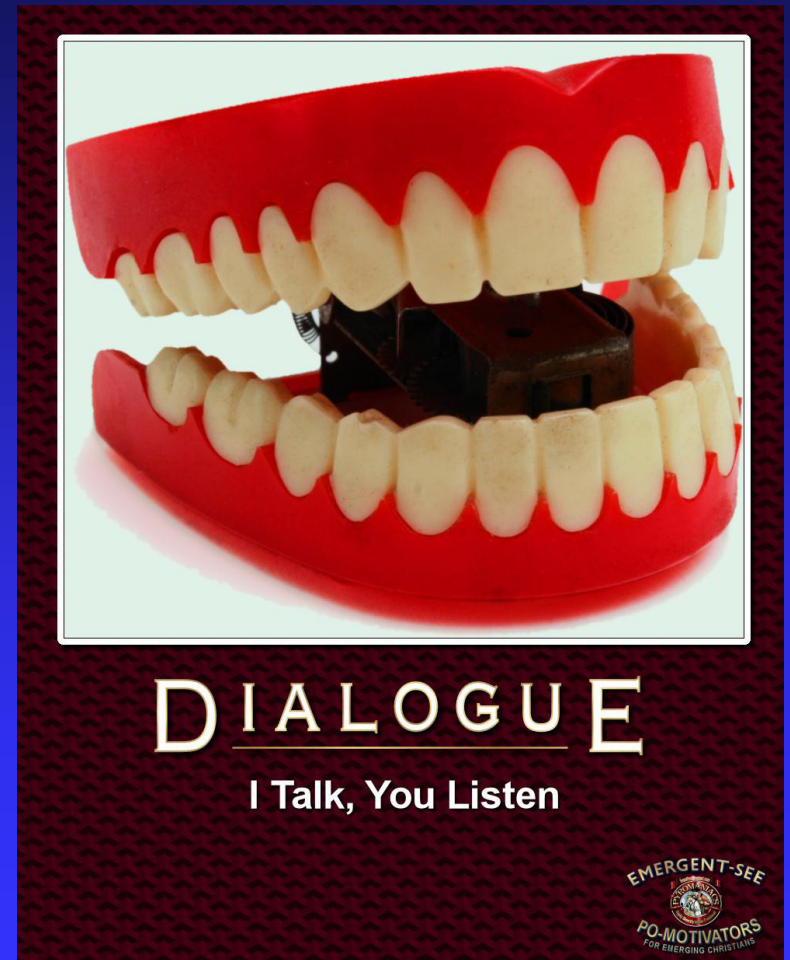
CHASTENED EPISTEMOLOGY

I'm Probably Wrong about a Lot of Things,
But I'm *Sure* You Are Wrong about Everything.
And Your Confidence Is Driving Me Crazy!



Emergent Epistemology

- Endless dialogue
- Middle ground mania
- Uncertainty



Emergent Epistemology

“The key to navigating postmodernity's choppy, crazy waters is...to ride the waves and *bridge the opposites*, especially where they converge in reconciliation and illumination” (Italics added).

Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 163

Emergent Epistemology

“A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a missional, evangelical, post/Protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, incarnational, depressed-yet hopeful, emergent, unfinished Christian.”

Full Title of Brian McClaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy*

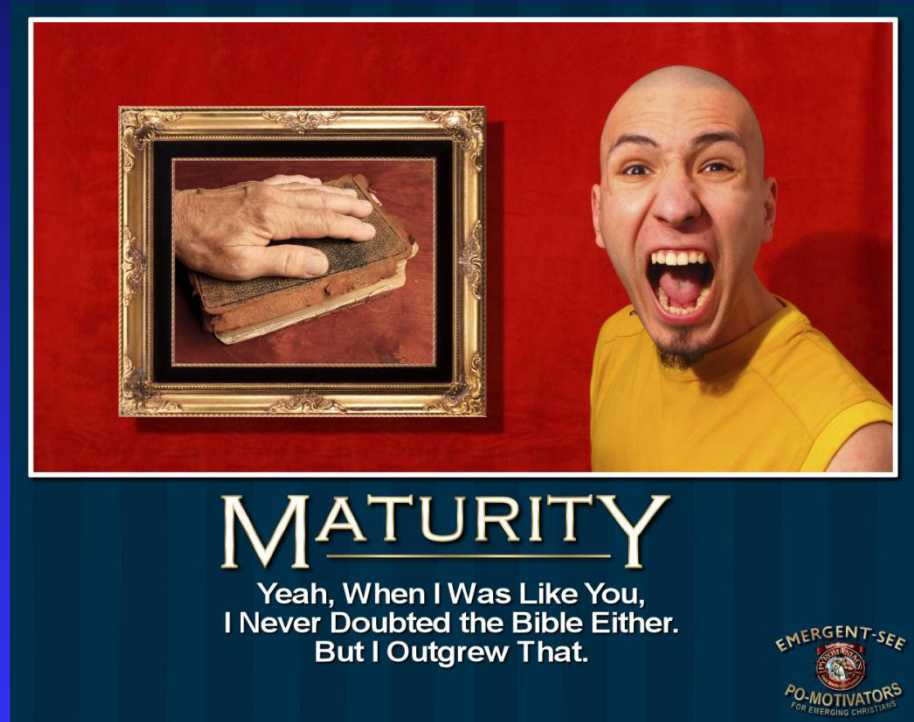
Emergent Epistemology

- “...ask me if Christianity (my version of it, yours, the Pope’s, whoever’s) is *orthodox*, meaning *true*, and here’s my honest answer: *a little, but not yet*...To be a Christian in a generously orthodox way is not to claim to have the truth captured, stuffed, and mounted on the wall...But we keep seeking.”

Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 293

Emergent Epistemology

“I grew up thinking that we’ve figured out the Bible...that we know what it means. Now I have no idea what most of it means.”



Kristen Bell; quoted in *Christianity Today*, 11/1/04

Emergent Epistemology

“How do you know that the records we have of Jesus are really what happened?...I would have to say that I cannot know this with absolute, undoubtable, unquestionable certainty.”

Brian McClaren, *The Church in the Emerging Culture*, 201

Emergent Epistemology

“Most of the emerging leaders I know share my agony over this question (on homosexuality)...Frankly, many of us don’t know what we should think about homosexuality. We’ve heard all sides but no position has yet won our confidence so that we can say ‘it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us’...Perhaps a five-year moratorium on making announcements.”

Brian McClaren, cited in Oakland, 212.

Biblical Epistemology

- Perspicuity (2 Pet 3:16?)
- Certainty (2 Tim 2:15; Luke 1:4; 1 John 5:13; Gen 3:1)
- Unbelief masquerading as uncertainty

Biblical Clarity: Homosexuality

- Gen 1:27
- Lev 18:22; 20:13
- Matt 19:3-6
- Rom 1:26-27
- 1 Cor 6:9-11
- Jude 7

Emergent Bibliology: Authority

- “Anglicans have demonstrated this both/and beautifully in relation to Scripture. Scripture is always a factor in Anglican thinking. In Anglicans’ best moments, it is their primary factor, but it is never...the only factor. Rather Scripture is always in dialogue with tradition, reason, and experience. None of them sola can be the ultimate source of authority...” (Italics added).

Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 210.

Biblical: Authority

- Inspiration (2 Tim 3:16)
- *Sola scriptura* (Mark 7:13)
- Reason and experience? Prov 3:5; 14:12; Isa 55:8-9
- Where in Scripture are we told to dialogue with all four?

Emergent: Worship

“Post-moderns prefer to encounter Christ by using all their senses. That’s part of the appeal of classical liturgical or contemplative worship: the incense and candles, making the sign of the cross, the taste and smell of the bread and wine, touching icons and being anointed with oil.”

Julie B. Sevig, *The Lutheran*, 9/2001.

Emergent: Worship

- “multisensory and interactive ... Through various experimental elements as well as through the space itself, we can actually preach. Art preaches. Scripture preaches. Music preaches. Even silence preaches.”

Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 186

Emergent: Worship

“... it was from Catholic contemplatives that I entered an undergraduate degree in the liberal arts of the Spirit.”

Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 175.

Biblical: Worship

- Why not go back to the very beginning?
- Where in Scripture are we told that it is essential to embrace ancient liturgical and contemplative practices?
- Matt 6:7

The Beginning?

- Acts 20:29-“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” (Italics added).

Emergent: Preaching

“At Solomon’s porch, sermons are not primarily about my extracting truth from the Bible to apply to people’s lives... So our sermons are not lessons that precisely define belief so much as they are stories that welcome our hopes and ideas and participation” (Italics added).

Doug Pagitt, cited in Oakland, 41-42.

Emergent: Preaching

“It isn't about clever apologetics or careful exegetical or expository preaching...Emerging generations are hungering to experience God in worship” (Italics added).

Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 116

Emergent: Preaching

“A spiritual Tsunami has hit postmodern culture. The wave will build without breaking for decades to come. The wave is this: People want to *know* God. They want *less to know about God* ...they want new experiences, especially new experiences of the divine” (Italics added).

Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 420.

Emergent: Doctrine



“...something beyond a belief system or doctrinal array or even a practice. I mean an attitude—an attitude toward God and our neighbor and our mission that is *passionate*.”

Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 117-18.

Biblical: Preaching

- Biblical priority of preaching-Acts 2:42;
2 Tim 3:15–4:2; Neh 8; Matt 4:4
- New dark ages?

Emergent: Kingdom

“The Kingdom of God is a central conversation in emerging communities...And let me tell you ‘Kingdom of God’ language is really big in the emerging church” (Italics added).

Doug Pagitt, cited in Oakland, 163.

Biblical: Kingdom

- Kingdom cannot come through human effort
- Matt 23:37-39
- Premillennialism

Emergent: Social Gospel

“The church has been preoccupied with the question, ‘What happens to your soul after you die?’ As if the reason for Jesus coming can be summed up in, ‘Jesus is trying to get more souls into heaven as opposed to hell, after they die.’ I just think a fair reading of the Gospels blows that out of the water.”

Brian McClaren, cited in Oakland, 203.

Emergent: Kingdom

“He selected 12 and trained them in a new way of life. He sent them to teach everyone this new way of life...Even if only a few would practice this new way, many would benefit. Oppressed people would be free. Poor people would be liberated from poverty. Minorities would be treated with respect. Sinners would be loved, not resented.”

Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 111.

Emergent: Kingdom

“Industrialists would realize that God cares for sparrows and wildflowers-so their industries should respect, not rape, the environment. The homeless would be invited in for a hot meal. The kingdom of God would come-not everywhere at once, not suddenly, but gradually like a seed growing in a field, like yeast spreading in a lump of bread dough, like light spreading across the sky at dawn.”

Brian McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 111.

Biblical: Social Gospel

- Priority of evangelism and discipleship (Matt 28:18-20)
- The world will remain in Satan's grasp (2 Cor 4:4) until the Second Advent (Rev 11:15)

Emergent: Ecumenism

“A goal for evangelicals in the postmodern world is to accept diversity as a historical reality, but to seek unity in the midst of it. This perspective will allow us to see Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches as various forms of the true church-all based on apostolic teaching and authority, finding common ground in the faith expressed by classical Christianity.”

Biblical: Ecumenism

- John 17:17, 20-23
- Step toward a one-world religion?

Emergent: Atonement

“a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed ...If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus’ own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil.”

Chalke and Mann, cited in Enns, 694.

Biblical: Atonement

- Penal substitution

- Heb 9:22

- Isa 53:5

Emergent Prophecy: Importance

“If Revelation were a blueprint of the distant future, it would have been unintelligible to its original readers...In light of this, Revelation becomes a powerful book about the kingdom of God here and now, available to all.”

Brian McClaren, cited in Oakland, 158.

Emergent Prophecy: Importance

“Biblical signs such as baptismal identity and Eucharistic thanksgiving will take on new meaning. *The church will be less concerned about having an eschatology* and more committed to being an eschatological community” (Italics added).

Interview by Jordan Cooper with Robert Webber, cited in Oakland,
136.

Biblical Prophecy: Importance

- 27% of Scripture was prophetic at the time it was written
- 2 Pet 1:19

Six Areas of Redefinition

- Missions
- Knowledge
- Scripture
- Church
- Christ
- Prophecy