

The Emerging Churches in the Book of Judges  
by John Ronning (jronning@wycliffe.edu)  
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My investigation into the emerging church movement (ECM) was motivated by finding out that my *alma mater* (Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield, PA) has adopted the goal of being the seminary of choice for the emerging church. This essay therefore will focus on matters which are relevant to BTS. This means that this essay will also focus on Brian McLaren (not the emerging church movement in general), since McLaren's influence on BTS has been evident in a number of ways, the most obvious being that in a 20 minute presentation on the new direction of BTS ("Seminary on the Mission"), president Dave Dunbar quotes Brian McLaren (but not anything in the Bible) as justification for this new direction: "If you have a new world, you need a new church."<sup>1</sup> McLaren is one of the leaders of an organization within the ECM called "Emergent Village." What I have learned keeps reminding me of my studies in the book of Judges, especially the two so-called appendices (chapters 17–18 and 19–21). Unlike the rest of the book which deals with how the judges led Israel, these two stories each feature a Levite, or what in emerging church terminology is called a "missional leader" (if you've never heard of this terminology, what you'll learn first about the emerging church is its apparent dislike for Biblical terminology). These missional leaders of emerging churches in Israel are, to put it mildly, not positive role models for us.

The title is not meant to convey that there is an exact parallel between today's ECM and what we read in Judges. One shouldn't expect there to be; part of the idea of today's emerging church is that emerging churches will and must look differently in different times and places, since how they emerge depends in part on the interaction between missional churches and culture; the church is always emerging. Thus we see "emerging churches," part of "the emerging church movement," not one emerging church, and in these stories there are two "emergent villages" (Dan and Gibeah) corresponding in some respects to today's "Emergent Village."

The title does suggest, however, that in the phenomenon of ECM there is nothing really new. We can note many differences of detail between what we read in Judges and what we see in the modern scene; sometimes we will see opposites. But I would say that there is a fundamental similarity between then and now, namely, that the emerging churches then and now are doing what is right in their own eyes, which includes a *selective* obedience (thus also selective disobedience) to Scripture. This description seems to be what binds together the different manifestations of religious impulses in Judges, from the emerging missional leaders of chapters 17 and 19, to the emergent village of

Dan in chapter 18, to the emergent village of Gibeah in chapter 19, and to the emerging churches led by Judah and Benjamin in chapters 20 and 21.

The following is not written simply "on behalf of" the traditional churches of today, and "against" the emerging churches of today. Today's traditional church (if there were such a unified concept) cannot be our standard by which we measure other churches. Many Christians' functional definition of Protestantism might be not far off from "we have no Pope, we do what is right in our own eyes." It is fitting for all of us, then (I include myself), to constantly take warning from this portion of Scripture, as from all of Scripture, lest these narratives of unfaithfulness be found to describe us as well.

The Bible does not describe churches as "emerging." A description drawn from the book of Judges itself would be more like "departing": "They turned aside [departed] quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked [in the time of Joshua] in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do likewise" (Judg 2:17). In acting this way they were like the generation that left Egypt only to die in the wilderness: "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" (Exod 32:8; cf. Deut 9:12).

On the other hand, sometimes churches are departing from error and turning to truth: they are reforming. Departing from Babylon, and returning to Jerusalem. "Emerging" then is not very descriptive or helpful terminology; it is value neutral. Is it departing or reforming? Politicians seem to always assume that we are stupid enough to think that change is inherently good, but in the church not all change is reformation; more often in the Bible and in church history it is in the direction of error. The change in question might be more like "out of the frying pan and into the fire."

What follows, then, are descriptions of various aspects of the departing, apostasizing people of God in Judges 17–21; different players in different scenes, all of which is summarized by the narrator, "In those days, there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes." And Paul tells us, "These things happened to them as examples, and are written for our instruction."

#### **A postmodern parishioner.**

Postmodernists get to make up their own ideas of reality, and do their own interpretation of texts, thus make their own definitions of orthodoxy (or even decide whether there is such a thing as orthodoxy). They look down on the idea of text-based truth; texts really cannot communicate objectively to us. To take this out of the realm of the theoretical, let me give a real life and relevant example.

Dale B. Martin teaches religion at Yale. Why I use this particular person as an example will become evident later. He tells students where he's coming from on the first day of class: Marxist, Post-modernist, Episcopalian, and homosexual. "So, if any of you have older brothers ..."2 Martin has written a book called *Sex and the Single Savior*, in which, according to the publisher, "Martin argues for engaging Scripture ... in order to find a faith that has no foundations other than Jesus Christ."3

Sounds good, but what does that mean? The short answer is, it means ignoring the Bible whenever you wish and going by your own idea of what Jesus would want; ignoring the Bible when it doesn't agree with your idea of Jesus (thus, neo-orthodoxy dressed up in new language). In the above mentioned book Martin describes how in class he answers the question, "What does the Bible say about homosexuality?" He puts the Bible on a speaker's podium and then says to the class, "Okay, let's see what it says. Listen." And after some moments of silence, he says "Apparently the Bible can't talk" (p. 5). And so, the Bible doesn't "say" anything about anything, it "simply cannot be used in the modern foundationalist way with the expectation that reliable, secure ethical guidance will result. ... *how we read* is what produces 'meaning,' not the text itself" (p. 25).

What all this comes down to is that the Jesus Christ who is the only foundation for Martin's faith is a reader-created Jesus Christ, not the Jesus Christ who exists and is revealed objectively in Scripture; thus, the reader-created Jesus is a false Jesus, an idol. The reader-created Jesus Christ might be homosexual: "A celibate Jesus, if constructed according to our available evidence, does *not* fit historical context well. ... We end up with a rather queer Christ who is both a celibate virgin and a loyal husband" [bridegroom of the church!] (pp. 98-99). By "queer" he means unique but then he goes on to the other meaning of queer: "Is it any wonder that the gay imagination can so easily find a Jesus for itself?" (pp. 99). John is "the most homoerotic of the Gospels" in which "Thomas is invited to penetrate the holes in Jesus' body" (p. 100).

Biblical religion is, of course, truth taught in texts: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your fervor. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall diligently repeat them to your children, and you shall talk about them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way; when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut 6:5-7).

In Judges 17 we read about an Ephraimite named Micah. He repented of stealing 1100 pieces of silver from his mother, returned it to her, and she in turn consecrated it to the LORD (YHWH, Yahweh, Jehovah) for her son to make a carved image and a cast idol (*pésel ûmassêkâ*; Judg 17:3), which he does with the help of the

neighborhood silversmith. The exact expression used to describe Micah's idols is found among the words which Moses commanded the Israelites to keep upon their hearts: "Cursed is the man who makes a carved image or a cast idol (*pésel ûmassêkâ*), an abomination to the LORD, the work of a craftsman's hands" (Deut 27:15). By an objective reading of the text (not just Deut 27:15 but others), Micah is cursed by God, a fact of which he is apparently totally unaware. Micah sets up these idols in his own private shrine, and a Levite passing through on his way from Bethlehem agrees to become his priest.

Micah's house church, his "new way of doing church" (I use emergent terminology here) is going well. His missional leader does a little work on the side for some spies from the tribe of Dan who are passing through on their own mission. While there, the spies take note of the gods of the house church, and when they come back that way as part of a 600 man army on a mission, they advise their countrymen to steal the idols for themselves. The missional leader is offered a promotion and gladly leaves Micah's house church to become the missional leader of a city church, the emergent village of Dan.

How does Micah respond to these challenges? Like a typical postmodern hypocrite. Suddenly there are clear standards of right and wrong! Micah got his neighbors together and chased after the Danites, ready to fight for what is his. When he catches up to them they ask him, "What is the matter with you, that you have mustered yourselves" (18:24). Micah's answer is very un-postmodern: "You have taken my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what else do I have, so how can you say to me, 'What's the matter with you?'" (v. 24). Micah's answer smacks of foundationalism. He doesn't think he should have to explain why it is wrong for them to steal from him, but he finds out they can be just as postmodern as he could be, though in a different direction; their idea is, "might makes right": "Do not let your voice be heard among us, or some hot tempered men will fall upon you, and take away your life, and those of your household" (v. 25). And so, "Micah saw that they were too strong for him, and turned and went back to his home" (v. 26).

On what basis could Micah appeal to the Danites? Is he suddenly going to quote the Bible, the eighth commandment, "You shall not steal?" If he did that, that might recall a few verses earlier, "You shall not make for yourselves any idol." Micah doesn't quote the Bible, he appeals to natural law; the Danites should know intuitively why he has a problem with them: "How can you say, 'What's the matter with you?'" As it turns out, they have a different idea about natural law. If Micah can make up his own rules about worship, why can't the Danites make up their own rules about property rights?

In his worship, Micah strikes me as a pretty good

postmodernist, a disciple of Dale Martin. The Bible doesn't "say" anything about anything, therefore doesn't say anything about the character of God or how he is to be worshiped. Micah's name on the other hand is not postmodern; it means "Who is like the LORD?" This question is supposed to have the obvious answer "No one is like the LORD our God!" But Micah has answered it differently based on his own culture and experience, and so he makes some Canaanite idols to represent YHWH, the one true God. He has a reader-created Jesus, just like Dale Martin does.

But how can Micah be postmodern when he's obviously actually pre-modern? Did he do time travel and take a course from Dale Martin at Yale? Maybe this little episode ought to demonstrate that postmodernism isn't postmodern at all. It's just a variation on the ancient practice of doing what is right in one's own eyes, rather than doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD, which is what our God requires of us (Exod 15:26; Deut 6:18; 12:25, 28; 13:18; 21:9). Obviously, if God requires us to do what is right in his eyes, it must be possible to discern what is right in his eyes, and Moses tells the Israelites over and over again that this knowledge comes through words, which are written down for us as texts. The New Testament equivalent of this requirement is found (just for one example) in John 8:31-32; "If you continue in my word, then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Conversely, "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear my word" (v. 43), and "Because I speak the truth, you do not believe me" (v. 45). Think about that—they could not believe Jesus, because he spoke the truth.

BTS board member John Armstrong is not Marxist, Episcopalian, or homosexual, but he does sound like Martin in his Post-modernism: "We can never secure truths completely, or precisely, because we are fallen and finite. We can and we must listen to Christ alone. ... Theology must be a humble attempt to 'hear him'—never about rational approaches to texts."<sup>4</sup> Is this not too close for comfort to Martin's view of Christ and Scripture cited above? Does not Armstrong's either/or approach leave open the same possibility of a false Jesus as we see in Martin (and Micah)? How are we to listen to Christ apart from a rational approach to his words which have been written down for us? Are we take an irrational approach? A mystical approach?

Armstrong has apparently not learned his post-modernist anti-foundationalism from Dale Martin but from John Franke. The evidence for this is not only the dependence on Franke evident in the text and footnotes of the article cited, but in his dependence on Karl Barth (Franke has written a book on Barth).<sup>5</sup> Strangely, Armstrong contrasts his new approach with that of evangelical Wayne Grudem's systematic theology. Systematic theologies are written for the same reason

that Hebrew grammars are written; they are attempts to systematize truth in order to facilitate teaching that truth. Armstrong sets up a straw man in which a systematic theology is represented as equivalent to *the exhaustive truth* of Scripture and accuses Grudem of exemplifying this method (p. 4). What is so strange about this is that Armstrong calls Karl Barth, who wrote the longest systematic theology in the history of the universe, "a great theologian" (p. 1). Further, the title of Armstrong's article is apparently adapted from a book called *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, a series of essays from writers who describe Barth's influence on them, including Harvey Cox, whom Barth's writings turned from evangelicalism to a point where the next logical step for him was liberation theology.<sup>6</sup> Something else strange about all this is that at the 2005 Evangelical Theological Society convention, in a debate with J. P. Moreland, Franke read extensively from Karl Barth as if to say, "Barth said it, I believe it," that is, he quoted Barth the same way we quote the Bible. All of which raises the question whether in the message "follow Christ, not texts" the reality is that Christ is followed from Barth's texts rather than the biblical texts?

Back to Judges: every actor, every group in these two pericopes, though sometimes drastically opposed to another, has in common this autonomy according to which the individual decides what is right and wrong. Could it be, then, that what is now called "postmodernism" is just a modern philosophical trick to justify doing what is right in one's own eyes?

### **A missional leader with a generous orthodoxy (Judges 17-18)**

An itinerant Levite passes by Micah's neighborhood. Even before telling us that he is a Levite, the writer tells us that he is a "young man" (v. 7). In fact, the writer tells us again and again that he is a young man: "A young man ... a Levite" (17:7); "the Levite ... the young man" (17:11, and again in v. 12); "the young man, the Levite" (18:5, and again in v. 15). Levites were not eligible for service until age 30 (Numbers 4). Youths should be under mature supervision, but this missional leader was off on his own, and it shows.

Some background is in order. Deut 33:8-9 explains that the ministry of the Levites is to teach the Bible (the Pentateuch, so far) in Israel, and this passage also explains why they were chosen for this ministry:

Of [the tribe of] Levi he [Moses] said; "Let your Thummim and your Urim belong to your godly man, / whom you proved at Massah, / with whom you contended at the waters of Meribah. / Who said of his father and mother, 'I did not consider them,' / And he did not acknowledge his brothers, / nor did he regard his own sons. / But they observed your word, / and kept your covenant.

The text refers to the obedience of Moses towards God and in opposition to complaining Israel in Exod 17:1-7,

as well as to the fact that the Levites rallied to Moses after the golden calf incident when Moses asked, “Who is on the LORD’s side?” (Exod 32:26). Moses commanded them to go through the camp and put the idolaters to death without regard to whether they were neighbor, friend, or even brother; “the Levites did according to the word of Moses, and of the people that day about 3000 men fell” (vv. 27–28).

In our look at Micah above I noted that “carved image and cast idol” from Judg 17:3–4 agrees exactly with the curse of Deut 27:15; “Cursed is the man who makes a carved image or a cast idol, an abomination to the LORD, and sets it up in secret.” This was the first in a series of curses to be pronounced in a loud voice by the Levites when Israel entered the promised land, with all Israel solemnly saying “Amen” after each one.

To carry on the legacy of Moses and the duty of the Levites according to Deut 33:8–9, then, this Levite should act as did Moses at the worship of the golden calf, he should remember the curse and repeat it. The fact that Micah set up his idols openly, not secretly (as the curse envisions) is testimony to the fact that the Levites in general had not done their job: no one in Micah’s family or neighborhood seems to have any concern about his idolatry.

Deuteronomy 13 describes three scenarios of apostasy and tells Israel how to respond in each case. The first involves a false prophet who shows some miracle and tries to get people to worship another god. The LORD tells Israel that this is a test to demonstrate whether or not his people love him with their whole hearts. If they do, they will demonstrate that love by putting the false prophet to death, and “purge the evil from among you” (v. 6). The second scenario is if an individual turns to idolatry; when an Israelite discovers such idolatry, he is required even to turn in his own family members to be put to death. This is the situation in Judges 17, and no one who knew about Micah’s idolatry (his sons, his neighbors, the silversmith, the Levite, then the Danites in chapter 18) did anything about it. Instead the Levite is generous to Micah, at least according to one idea of what is generous.

The missional leader is also generous with the five spies from Dan who pass by in chapter 18. They find out that he is a missional leader so they ask him for spiritual guidance: “Inquire of God, so that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous” (Judg 18:5). Recall the mention of the Thummim and Urim from Deut 33:8. These terms refer to the sacred lot by which certain decisions would be made in Israel, including the establishment of the boundaries of the promised land, each tribe’s boundaries, and which cities would be chosen as cities for the Levites to live in. The decision of the sacred lot was as much the will of God as the spoken word through a prophet.

The reason I say this is that the will of God in the matter for which the spies were making inquiry was already made objectively known. The spies were traveling up north to find a good place to conquer. But Danite territory had already been established by God in the mid-west of Israel, to the west of Benjamin, south of Ephraim.

Dan had trouble conquering the Amorites in their allotted territory (Judg 1:34–35), so some of them turned north looking for something easier, on their own initiative changing the mission that God had given them, when “Joshua cast lots in Shiloh before the LORD” to determine where they should live (Josh 18:10; 19:40–48).

The missional leader’s duty is thus clear. He should say “What are you doing departing from the land God gave you to conquer and going somewhere else? The will of God has already been made clear in the time of Joshua, who cast lots before the LORD to decide where you should live. In not fighting where God told you to fight you are like the Israelites who died in the promised land. Repent, turn around and go back where God put you, and fight the Amorites. If you don’t, then by no means will you prosper, for no one who sets his course against the revealed will of God will prosper!”

Instead, he is generous with them: “Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the LORD’s approval” (v. 6). One feature of the NASB reference edition that is helpful is that when the translation departs from a literal translation for the sake of proper English, the literal reading is usually put in the margin, which sometimes is helpful in making connections between two passages that otherwise would not be apparent. Notice the irony of the following two verses:

Joshua cast lots in Shiloh before the LORD (Josh 18:10).

The way on which you are going is before the LORD (Judg 18:6).

The only Scripture this missional leader quotes in these two episodes is by accident and out of context! Joshua cast lots in Shiloh before the LORD to tell the Danites where to live, what mission to go on, where to destroy Canaanite civilization and set up the kingdom of God. When they decide to change the mission and go off according to their own desires, directly contrary to the will of God, the one who is supposed to speak for God tells them that this way of rebellion “is before the LORD,” i.e. they will have the LORD’s blessing and will enjoy success.

Now, it becomes apparent that the Levite can be generous with Micah, then the Danites, because he is first generous with himself. There are at least ten identifiable kinds of violations of the law of Moses in these two chapters, in which the Levite is involved, either as a participant or a facilitator. (1) In the matter at hand, he approves of the Danites leaving their

assigned territory and mission in the mid-west, and (2) going somewhere else to fight (apparently in the allotted territory of Naphtali), stealing land belonging to another tribe. (3) He himself is committing the same kind of sin. The sacred lot also determined where the Levites should live (Joshua 21). Bethlehem is not a levitical city (Josh 21:9–16); three times we read that the Levite was from this non-levitical city (17:7, 8, 9), and twice that he was journeying, not to find a levitical city, but “to stay wherever I may find something” (vv. 8, 9). How can he speak against the conduct of the Danites when he is doing the same kind of thing? Like Levite, like people. Like missional leader, like church. (4) He fails to take action against idolaters as required by Deuteronomy 13; and (5) he himself is involved in idolatry. (6) He is a thief, helping the Danites steal Micah’s silver idols—he’s not even a repentant thief, as is Micah. (7) He takes a job as a priest—only the sons of Aaron could be priests, which means Levites could not be priests (most obviously, see Numbers 16, where the ground opened up and swallowed those Levites who wanted to be priests). (8) Levites were to be paid from the tithes of Israel, and were not to be on a salary, but this Levite took a salary from Micah (17:10). (9) Neither were Levites to serve a single family (as in chapter 17) or a single city (as in chapter 18). (10) Even if Micah’s shrine were not overtly idolatrous, his place of worship was not established by God (as required in Deuteronomy 12) and was thus a rival to legitimate places of worship.

Again, the Levites were given the job of ministry because of loyalty demonstrated in the time of Moses. They disregarded the closest ties, even of family, when it was necessary to be loyal to God. Judg 17:11 says that Micah treated this Levite as one of his own sons, but this worthless Levite showed no loyalty to the one who treated him as a son. “The priest’s heart was glad” (18:20) when he got the chance to get a promotion from Micah to Dan, from family to city, from small congregation to large, and he was glad to assist in theft from his “father” Micah (as Micah had stolen from his mother, then repented, unlike the Levite) to facilitate his job promotion. His lack of loyalty to Micah was mirrored by his lack of loyalty to God. There is an old saying that “The man who will cheat *for* you will also cheat you,” to which can be added, “A man who will betray God will betray anyone.”

This youth was everything a Levite should not be. One might wonder, “Has he ever heard of Moses, much less studied him?” Here’s the shocker; this young man is finally identified in the next to the last verse of the story: “Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses” (18:30). Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses. It’s true that “son” can mean “grandson,” “descendent,” but there can’t be a great number of generations skipped here, because of chronological indicators given in the

next chapter which tell us that though this incident is recorded at the end of the book of Judges, historically it took place at the beginning of the period of Judges. It answers the question one has to ask as he reads through the book: “How did things get so bad and keep going worse in Israel?” The short answer is that ministers of God were not doing their job, so that “another generation arose, which did not know the LORD” (Judg 2:10).

I use the term “generous orthodoxy” in the title of this section because of how this term is used today. Brian McLaren has a book so named.<sup>7</sup> He says (p. 28) that he got the term from his mentor Stan Grenz, who says in turn he got it from Yale theologian Hans Frei, who called for something between liberalism and evangelicalism, with an element from each, though he was not sure that one could possibly find something between the two.<sup>8</sup>

As McLaren notes, liberal Protestants concentrate on the deeds and sayings of Jesus from his birth to death, things that should be emulated (p. 67). Of course, the reason they do so is that they do not believe in the incarnation or resurrection. They do not believe in the deity of Christ. As for the teaching of Jesus, they actually reject as inauthentic inventions of the church most of his words recorded in the Gospels, especially John. In reality, the view of Jesus held by Muslims and cultists such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons is much superior and closer to the Biblical view than is the view of liberals. How would emerging missional leaders be received if they advocated a generous orthodoxy that took an element of Jehovah’s Witnesses, or an element of Mormonism, and an element of evangelicalism? Not well, I trust. Then why should they be received when they call for something worse, an element of liberalism and an element of evangelicalism? Machen’s book *Christianity and Liberalism* is still much worth reading. Machen’s point is simply that Biblical Christianity and liberal Protestantism are two quite different religions. Liberalism, with its denial of the miraculous, is not a kind of Christianity at all.

To put it bluntly, a generous orthodoxy defined as taking a strand from liberalism and a strand from evangelicalism is syncretism, the same kind of heresy we see in Judges 17 and 18. This is so because it amounts to using the proper name for God but making that name describe someone other than the God of the Bible.

What is the meaning of our confession, “Jesus is Lord”? That question was asked at a conference called “Eternal Word in an ‘Emerging World’?” held at Westminster Theological Seminary on October 26–28, 2006. Someone made the point that this confession could mean different things in different cultures, and someone asked for clarification during the question and answer time on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Four professors responded

(Scott McKnight, John Franke, Michael Horton, and Dan McCartney), none of them making the point that should always be made first, namely, that in “Jesus is Lord,” the word “Lord” must be understood as standing for the Old Testament name of God (YHWH, Yahweh, Jehovah), for which the Greek translation of the Old Testament (and most since) used the word “Lord.” This is very clear from the Old Testament background to this confession that is evident in Rom 10:9–13 (Joel 2:32) and Phil 2:9–11 (Isa 45:23). So when Jesus said “Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24), echoing the divine speech of Isa 43:10 (as does John 13:19), it is tantamount to saying “Unless you believe that I am YHWH you will die in your sins.” Jesus is the eternal God of Israel who came into the world as a man. The works of God in the Old Testament are the works of our triune God, therefore the works of the Son. Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses, enabler of Micah’s idolatry, was unfaithful to the pre-incarnate Christ. The pre-incarnate Christ commanded a curse to be pronounced on those who made idols, and Jonathan was disloyal to Christ in failing to do so. Is that generous? And lest we think that all that “curse” stuff is just Old Testament and obsolete, Paul says “If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed” (1 Cor 16:22).

At the Westminster conference I referred to, Scot McKnight criticized D. A. Carson for focusing on Brian McLaren in his book *Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church*, since McLaren is just one of many leaders.<sup>9</sup> While acknowledging this fact, I will also focus on Brian McLaren because of his past associations with BTS (he has taught there, and John Franke, along with Brian McLaren, is in the leadership of Emergent Village), and because John Franke wrote an approving foreword to McLaren’s book *a Generous Orthodoxy* which is totally positive. In fact, one could say that McLaren’s book is in response to the call for a “generous orthodoxy” that appears in the book *Beyond Foundationalism*, co-authored by Stan Grenz and John Franke.<sup>10</sup>

Another foreword in *a Generous Orthodoxy* (Phyllis Tickle; paperback edition only) says that Brian McLaren is the new Martin Luther and this book is his 95 theses! And as noted above, Dave Dunbar, president of BTS, gave a 20 minute talk about the seminary’s new direction, which was heavily dependent on McLaren.

Franke’s approving foreword endorses McLaren’s idea of “seeking an understanding of the Christian faith that is both orthodox and generous.” The only real question for Christians is whether our concept of orthodoxy is Biblical, not whether it is “generous” according to the opinion of some man. I suppose one could say that when I was at BTS (1976–79) a certain generous orthodoxy was taught, that is, that we should not “major on the minors” or cause unnecessary

division. In contrast John Franke of the new BTS makes clear that “generous” means something quite different:

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the foundationalist impulse produced a theological division between the ‘left’ and ‘right’ among Anglo-Americans—liberals constructed theology upon the foundation of an unassailable religious experience while conservatives looked to an error-free Bible as the incontrovertible foundation of their theology. But in spite of all their differences, we can see that while liberal and conservative Christians appeared to be going their separate ways throughout the twentieth century, both were responding in different ways to the same modern, foundationalist agenda. (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

This would imply that if we are generous in our orthodoxy we will get “beyond foundationalism,” removing the impulse that has (unfortunately) divided evangelical born again believers from liberal unbelieving false professors. Apparently, Evangelical Christianity and unbelieving liberalism are just two modernist religions, aberrant forms of biblical Christianity, and we’ve got to get beyond both of them. Apparently, the problem with liberalism is epistemological theory (something most people think little about), not unbelief, and this problem is shared with conservatives. Franke thus lumps believing, born again Christians together with unbelieving enemies of the gospel as having a common defect, and ignores the most basic distinction that God has made between the two from the beginning, when God said “I will set enmity” between the two seeds, righteous and wicked. For real Christians, the only issue is what is God’s idea of orthodoxy, not ours.

We see in Exod 32:4–5 that Aaron had what could be called a “generous orthodoxy,” showing sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of postmodern culture—the desire for community (“they ate and drank, and rose up to play”) and story (“this is your god, Israel, who brought you up from Egypt”), going along with the crowd and making the golden calf, taking an element of paganism (probably Egyptian), making up his own unbiblical feast (doing church his own new way), as well as an element of biblical religion (using the right name for God in calling for the feast, and referring to the redemption of Israel from Egypt, the great Old Testament “story”). Was Aaron being faithful, maintaining the center of the faith (confessing YHWH as the God who brought Israel out of Egypt)? Seeing how Aaron’s compromise led to 3000 of them being executed and the whole nation nearly destroyed, it is doubtful that one should call it generous. Is giving people what they want generous, if it leads them to God’s judgment? Was Micah’s worthless Levite really “generous” with him, leaving him to die in his sins? Micah’s mother pronounced a curse on whoever stole her silver; Micah heard that curse, and feared the

consequences, because he was the one who stole it. He repented, returning the silver to his mother. This gives us a paradigm for what should have happened when the Levite happened upon Micah's idolatry. But the Levite loved neither God (which is defined in both Testaments as keeping his commandments) nor Micah (leaving him to go his own cursed way); only himself.

### **A Success not of God**

#### **(the Emergent Village of Dan, chapter 18)**

The emergent village of Dan has a superficial appearance of faith and righteousness as it goes about its missional activities. They send spies to reconnoiter a place in the north of the promised land for them to conquer, appearing to be like Moses (Numbers 13) and Joshua (Joshua 2), pressing forward on a Biblical mission. The five spies are encouraged by the missional leader with a generous orthodoxy, "Go in peace, the way in which you are going has the LORD's approval" (Judg 18:6). They complete their mission, then make their report to the emerging Danites, sounding like the famous men of faith, Joshua and Caleb, as they encourage their countrymen to fulfil their mission:

Arise, and let us go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good! And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land. ... For God has given it into your hand. A place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth (Judg 18:9-10).

Sounds just like our heroes Joshua and Caleb, does it not (Num 13:30; 14:6-9)? Men of faith and action. Their fellow emergent church members followed their advice, and had good success. "They came to Laish, ... and struck them with the edge of the sword, and burned the city with fire. ... And they rebuilt the city and lived there" (Judg 18:27-28).

What is the reason for their success? Were the spies telling the truth, "God has given it into your hand"? Actually, the narrator points us in another direction. First, there is no statement such as we are accustomed to from the book of Joshua, such as, "The LORD struck them and delivered them up before the men of Dan." Instead the narrator shows us that this success is explainable in merely human terms:

The five men came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure, for there was no ruler humiliating them for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone [or, with Aram] (Judg 18:7).

That is, they were sitting ducks. So when the conquest takes place, the narrator repeats these words in order to make it clear that their success was not of God, but was explainable on a merely human level:

They came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword. And there was no one to deliver them, because it was far from Sidon,

and they had no dealings with anyone [or, with Aram] (Judg 18:27-28).

And of course, if one goes beyond the superficialities of their success, one can see why this is not described as a work of God. As noted in our previous section, Dan's territory was in the middle of the country, to the west of Benjamin. They left their allotted territory to go far to the north. They refused to fight where God told them to fight, which means that they are not like Caleb and Joshua at all, but just the opposite: they were like the Israelites who would not listen to Joshua and Caleb, who would not enter the promised land, who were afraid of dying in battle, who were sentenced to die in the wilderness. The narrator brings this point out by three times describing the 600 Danites as "armed with weapons of war" (Judg 18:11, 16, 17), which reminds us of the expression that Moses used of those who were sentenced to die in the wilderness, when they went to fight the Canaanites after being warned not to in Numbers 14: "You each armed yourselves with his weapons of war" (Deut 1:41).

Far from being a holy army doing the will of God (or, in emergent terminology, trying to make God's dreams come true), they are an armed gang using their might to steal, to threaten, and to kill. They steal Micah's idols, and they steal land from Naphtali, conquer a Canaanite city and set up an idolatrous shrine probably little different from what had been there before. But note carefully: they had success, at least for a time, until at least 732 BC, when the Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III conquered the northern portions of Israel in fulfilment of the covenant curses (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28) which the emergent leader with a generous orthodoxy was so loathe to pronounce.

All of which is to say that apparent success can never be used to justify conduct which is in violation of the word of God. This is a lesson for the emerging church and the traditional church, which is also the previously emerging church.

The emergent village of Dan enjoyed success not by the power of God but by changing their mission from God from something difficult (conquering the Amorites in the midwest) into something easy (conquering the helpless inhabitants of Laish). They covered their disobedience with biblical rhetoric and fooled themselves into thinking they had God's blessing, all the while committing multiple violations of his word. The worthless Levite Jonathan, the missional leader with a generous orthodoxy, was their enabler in evil rather than a shepherd of God's flock. We can see parallels to the modern ECM to the extent that elements of it want to change the mission of God from something difficult (preaching the truth, the whole counsel of God, which incurs the wrath of the modern Canaanite western world) into something easy (forming nice communities, doing the kind of social work which incurs the approval

of the world). Jesus said “The world hates me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil” (John 7:7), and “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you” (John 15:19).

Why does Brian McLaren want to go beyond the conservative / liberal division of the past, joining postconservatives (= postevangelicals) and postliberals together? Because conservatives and liberals are like a rescue party that has split into two groups, both of whom are having problems, and they need to reunite to save planet earth (p. 158, *a Generous Orthodoxy*). This goal makes no sense at all unless we understand that for McLaren the mission is changed. Liberals are enemies of the true Gospel, teaching lies that keep people from being saved, from believing in Christ, but because they want to save people from poverty, disease, and pollution (not moral but physical) they are qualified for the new mission in McLaren’s eyes. The New Testament mission given to us by Jesus is to call sinners out of darkness and into the light, that sinners repent, experience a new birth, receive the right to become children of God, to live in the hope of eternal life; in short, to build the church of Jesus Christ in all nations. McLaren says “I’m more interested in a gospel that is universally efficacious for the whole earth before death in history” (*a Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 124).

Big on the world’s agenda is the normalization of homosexuality. Paul tells us:

Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:9–11).

Now, who might try to deceive us that homosexuals will after all inherit the kingdom of God? Brian McLaren is at least half way to that position, and I can say that on internet sites (“blogs”) people in the ECM have used every argument against the Biblical teaching concerning homosexuality that I am used to hearing from unbelievers.

We should say first that Paul’s statement is good news for all sinners: “But you were washed clean.” It is indeed difficult for a homosexual to change; Paul tells the Corinthians that their change was a work of God, just like driving out the Amorites from the valley of the promised land would take a work of God, which the Danites found too difficult. Why was it too difficult for the Danites? We get a hint, I think, from Judg 1:19; “The LORD was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country. But they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots.” Maybe you have wondered about this text as

I did, “If the LORD was with them, why couldn’t they have victory over the iron chariots?” Moses told the Israelites not to fear Canaanites with numerous chariots because “the LORD your God ... is with you” (Deut 20:1), and Joshua had victory over Canaanites with numerous chariots (Josh 11:4–9). Why Judah could not succeed now is no doubt due to the fact that after the death of Joshua and the elders who served with him, Israel goes into a transition period until “another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD” (Judg 2:10), and the conquest ground to a halt. And so, in this transition period, the LORD was with Judah *in measure*, and Judah enjoys only partial success (and we should ask, does that description apply to much or most of the evangelical world today?). And in this period when Israel’s successes in battle were disappearing due to Israel’s disobedience, the emergent village of Dan is founded on the principle of success by changing the mission of God.

I mentioned above that Phyllis Tickle wrote one foreword to *a Generous Orthodoxy* (the paperback edition) and calls McLaren the new Martin Luther. Tickle is in favor of homosexual “marriage.”<sup>12</sup> McLaren himself has called for a moratorium on the issue, saying that the church should be silent about homosexuality for the next five years, during which time we should listen to what Bible scholars and others have to say, and then meet again and perhaps decide if we should be silent for another five years.<sup>13</sup> Half a year into this proposed period of silence, Dale Martin’s book came out, referred to above, *Sex and the Single Savior*, with the following endorsement appearing on the back:

Dale Martin’s important new book shows one of the highest possible kinds of respect for the Bible: he refuses to accept shortcuts and easy answers in the challenging journey of interpretation. His highly nuanced approach cannot be easily categorized but words like ‘formidable’ and ‘insightful’ and ‘ground breaking’ come to my mind. I have spent hours with the book and have learned a lot from it and plan to refer back to it often.

That’s Brian McLaren endorsing this filthy book which justifies a reader-created (idol) Jesus, including a homoerotic Jesus for homosexuals. So much for silence on the issue of homosexuality.

### **Celebrating the Past, Engaging the Future**

We can also say about these Danites that they are “celebrating the past, engaging the future.” The apostate Danites also looked to their ecclesiastical roots: “They called the name of the city ‘Dan,’ after Dan their father, who was born to Israel” (18:29). And no doubt they took special pride in having as their missional leader a descendent of Moses: “There [in the emergent village of Dan] they set up for themselves the carved image, and Jonathan, son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons, were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the time of the captivity of the land. So they set up

for themselves the carved image that Micah had made, all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh” (18:30–31). Moses is the past, Jonathan is the future. But Moses is relegated to some old book. According to Moses what they should have done is fight the Canaanites in the territory given to them by sacred lot, which means they had no business in this part of the country. But even if they did have legitimate business here in Ephraim, according to Moses what they should have done when they encountered Micah’s house church and its idols is to destroy them:

The carved images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. You shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned” (Deut 7:25–26).

But Moses was past, to be celebrated, not followed; the Danites were now future oriented, being missional in their own way, having changed God’s mission, and enjoying temporary success apart from the work of God. Perhaps they thought like Brian McLaren and Dave Dunbar: “There’s a new world, so we need a new church.”

“Celebrating the past, engaging the future” is the slogan adopted by BTS for its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and visitors to BTS now see this slogan on display, but what we no longer see on display is the motto from the founding of BTS, “put in trust with the Gospel” (1 Thess 2:4). A BTS alumnus and former BTS employee wrote to me,

I don’t understand their claim to “celebrate the past”. They certainly do not mean “celebrating our [the BTS] past”. I was told a number of times by John Franke (then Chair of the Faculty), David Dunbar, and Todd Mangum (present Moderator of the Faculty) that I wanted the “old Biblical”, and they were not at all interested in being or becoming “old Biblical”. The same individuals spoke quite disparagingly about “old Biblical”, saying that it was “all right for its time”, but then qualifying that by adding that they weren’t sure that even “then” Biblical was doing what the church really needed. ... I heard these statements and others like them a number of times, increasingly during my last two or three years there.

Meanwhile, the BTS past is not celebrating the BTS present or future. The same individual quoted above also said, “I have yet to meet a single BTS grad who is even mildly enthusiastic about what is happening there” (exceptions, of course, would be alumni who still work at BTS, many of whom are probably like the proverbial frog in the pot being slowly boiled to death not realizing how much things are changing). Another alumnus said, “When I’m in Pennsylvania I don’t drive anywhere near Biblical, because if I do my throat starts to dry up and I begin to cry.”

### **Another worthless missional leader: the Levite of Judges 19–20).**

The apostasy of Dan was a national emergency, since according to Deut 13:12–18 (the third scenario of apostasy in that chapter), when a city turned to idolatry, the whole nation must respond by destroying that city, so that “the LORD may turn from his burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as he has sworn to your fathers” (v. 17). Failure to act against the emergent village of Dan put the whole nation at risk of annihilation. In going to war against the city of Dan, and completely destroying it, never to be rebuilt, Israel would be “doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD” (Deut 13:18). That means that by doing nothing about Dan, Israel was doing what was right in their own eyes, putting the whole nation at jeopardy of judgment by God. Who should rally the nation against Dan? The Levites should, as Moses rallied them in Exodus 32. “Who is on the LORD’s side?” What is this Levite doing? He goes off to Bethlehem to woo back his concubine who has been unfaithful to him. What should he be doing? He should be trying to bring back the emerging church which has been unfaithful to God by ignoring the idolatry of Dan. Instead he stays in Bethlehem day after day, eating, drinking, and making merry while the hand of God is raised in judgment against the nation.

In chapter 20 we see that he is indeed capable of summoning the nation for missional work, to avenge a wrong that involved him personally (the rape and murder of his concubine). But none of the missional leaders rallied the nation to avenge the wrong that was done to God in the city of Dan. The missional leader is doing what is right in his own eyes, which is why the emerging church is also doing what is right in its eyes.

In Judges 19 there is a replay of Genesis 19, when the angels (disguised as men) came to visit Lot in Sodom, and the men of the city surrounded the house, pounding on the door that Lot bring out the men so that they could have sexual relations with them. In Judges 19, however, instead of two angels we have the Levite. Now the word “angel” both in Hebrew and Greek means “messenger.” The Levites were supposed to be messengers of God, by teaching the commandments of God and turning many back from evil (Mal 2:7, spoken of priests, but the Hebrew word can have the broader meaning “minister” and can be used of Levites as well). The importance of this teaching ministry is brought out in connection with the impending destruction of Sodom:

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? [namely, destroy Sodom and the other cities of the plain]. For Abraham will become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the

LORD may bring upon Abraham what he has spoken about him (Gen 18:17–19).

That teaching ministry is to be carried out by parents in Israel, but especially by the priests and Levites, the messengers of God. Now who is this Levite like in Judges 19? Like Abraham, the chosen of God? No, he is like Lot, whom God did not choose, who offered his virgin daughters to the perverts of Sodom; Lot, who had no spiritual legacy except as fathering two nations by incest who would be perpetual enemies of the people of God. The Levite of Judges 19, this worthless missional leader who went to Bethlehem to sweet talk his concubine to come back to him, grabbed her and shoved her out the door, saving his own skin while she was raped and abused all night, finally dying by morning. In Genesis 19 we see why God chose Abraham, not Lot; Abraham would leave a godly legacy, and in the nation the Levites were supposed to make that happen by teaching God's commandments. The Levites should thus be like Abraham, but this Levite is like Lot, who offered his two virgin daughters to the perverts of Sodom.

God told Abraham about what he was going to do to Sodom so that Abraham might use this knowledge to warn his children of the consequences of departing from God's commandments. Parents and ministers should pass on this knowledge in each generation. Their failure to do so can be seen in the emergent village of Gibeah, which had become New Sodom. Neither had the Levites prevented the idolatrous founding of the emergent village of Dan. Only when experiencing personal wrong does this Levite spring into action, rallying the whole nation, but not for God's sake; for his own sake.

### **Selective Obedience: Another Form of Doing What is Right in Our Own Eyes**

Even when we are doing what is biblical, doing what God requires of us, we may be doing what is right in our own eyes, if we are at the same time doing other things that are wrong, or are not doing other things that we should be doing. This is true both of the Levite and of the majority of the nation which acted against Benjamin in chapter 20. This is so because selective obedience to God is just another form of doing what is right in our own eyes.

*Doing* what is right in our own eyes follows from *thinking* what is right in our own eyes. What I mean is this: the reaction of Israel to the crime of the men of Gibeah is the reaction that they should have had against the idolatry of Dan. *What they did to Gibeah is what they should also have done to Dan.*

The men of Gibeah initially had in mind the same thing that the men of Sodom had in Genesis 19: "Bring out the man who came to your house so that we might know [i.e. have sexual relations with] him" (Judg 19:22;

cf. Gen 19:5). Instead they accepted the Levite's concubine as a substitute and sexually assaulted her all night long until she finally died. The men of Gibeah were guilty of both murder and adultery; since a concubine is a kind of wife, she is married, not just some kind of girl friend. In Deuteronomy, there is a series of ten possible law cases described by Moses which end with the statement "you shall purge the evil from your midst" (or, from Israel), this purging being accomplished by capital punishment. One of these ten involves murder (Deut 19:13), three involve a violation of the seventh commandment (Deut 22:21, 22, 23). The Israelites, then, are clearly correct in their Scripture-based demand to the tribe of Benjamin: "Deliver up the men, the worthless fellows [literally, sons of Belial] in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and [quoting Deuteronomy] purge the evil from Israel" (v. 13). One might add that the original intent of the men of Gibeah is prohibited as follows in the law: "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination" (Lev 18:22).

Their desire for justice is all well and good. Their zeal is commendable, except that its presumption to be biblical is hypocritical. The reason this is so is that in Deuteronomy 13 the same word "abomination" which was used in Lev 18:22 for homosexuality (what the neo-Sodomite men of Gibeah wanted to do to the Levite) is also used to describe what the 600 men from Dan did in Judges 18 (establishing an idolatrous city), and the expression "sons of Belial" used quite properly of the men of Gibeah both by the writer (Judg 19:22) and the Israelites (20:13), is also used of idolaters:

If you hear ... that some sons of Belial have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods, ...' you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, you shall strike the inhabitants of the city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. You shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It shall be a ruin forever, it shall never be rebuilt (Deut 13:12–16).

Judges 18 does not follow exactly the scenario described by Moses; the city of Dan was not seduced to idolatry, it was founded on idolatry. But the end result is the same, and the duty of Israel was clear. What they did to Gibeah (wiping it out) they should have done to Dan. What they did to purge evil according to their own sense of justice, quoting the Bible to back them up, is what they should have done to purge evil according to God's sense of justice.

All of this makes a lie out of the claim made by the Israelites when the limbs of the abused and murdered concubine made their way through the territory of

Israel:

All who saw it said, “*Nothing like this has ever happened* or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!” (Judg 19:30).

It is a lie because the sin of the emergent village of Dan (idolatry) is *like* the sin of the emergent village of Gibeah (sexual depravity and murder). God uses the word “abomination” to describe them both, and the same expression “sons of Belial” is used to describe the perpetrators of both. So “*something like this*” has indeed just happened, a city founded on idolatry, and Israel yawned. Now “something like this” happens in Gibeah and the nation is hypocritically ready to go to war. Doing what is right in our own eyes flows from thinking what is right in our own eyes, as we see exemplified by Israel deciding for itself what are the really bad sins. The challenge for us then is to regard idolatry as seriously as God does. This includes the kind of idolatry exemplified by Judges 17–18, where the correct name for God is used but the idea of God is that of the surrounding Canaanite culture. To bring the application up to date, to say the words “Jesus is Lord” is not a sufficient Christian confession if the Jesus being honored as Lord is a make believe deity, the product of those who are thinking what is right in their own eyes, that is, anyone other than the Jesus of Scripture.

There is a terrible price to pay for substituting our idea of right and wrong for God’s; when our obedience to Scripture is motivated by our own agreement with part of it rather than our submission to all of it, and the Israelites pay that terrible price in chapter 20.

As I said before, there is no question that the Israelites are in the right; their demand of Benjamin is just. Benjamin’s refusal to respond in justice means that Israel must go to war against them, and they do so at the command of God: “Judah shall go first” (20:18), just as Judah went first against the Canaanites after the death of Joshua (Judg 1:1–2). Gibeah had become like the worst of Canaanites (Sodom), and Benjamin had taken their side, and so would be treated by God as a Canaanite tribe. We also see Benjamin as neo-Canaanites in the statement “the LORD struck Benjamin before Israel” (v. 35), reminding us of how the LORD defeated the Canaanites in the time of Joshua. A third way that Benjamin is shown to be like the Canaanites in this battle is that the third day’s battle against Gibeah follows the pattern of the second battle against Ai in Joshua 8 (cf. Judg 20:29–46). Ai, of course, was a Canaanite city, delivered over to Joshua for annihilation by God.

But if the tribes of Israel were doing the will of God in going to battle against Benjamin, why did they lose the first two battles with thousands of casualties in each one? To answer that question, we can follow up on the observation that the decisive third battle of Gibeah was

like the second battle of Ai. Why was there a second battle of Ai? Because Israel lost the first battle of Ai. It was the only loss that Joshua experienced, and it happened because of the sin of one man, Achan, who stole treasure for himself from the spoils of Jericho. Because there was sin in the camp, 36 Israelites died in the first battle of Ai. But here in Judges 20, thousands of Israelites are dying in the first two battles against Benjamin. Was there sin in the camp? Was there an Achan in their midst?

One might search high and low throughout this chapter trying to find the clue as to what was the cause for the massive losses on the side of those who were in the right, but the clue is actually given in the very first verse: “Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah.” What is the clue? “From Dan to Beersheba” means “from north to south.” But how did this expression come to be used to mean “from north to south”? That question, of course, is answered in chapter 18. A group of 600 men emerged from their home church of Dan, left their allotted territory, abandoned the mission given to them by God, and went north on their own mission, and established a new city with an idolatrous worship. The only way “Dan” could come to mean “north” is that these idolaters had departed from the will of God and their mission in the midwest and established a new city called Dan in the north. So, “from Dan to Beersheba” means that there were idolaters from Dan joining in on this sacred mission against Benjamin.

So maybe there was something like 600 Achans in the camp, and we can understand why Israel lost badly in the first two battles. This calamity illustrates the danger of overlooking doctrine (what we are supposed to believe) in an attempt to build a movement based on practice, which is, according to Scot McKnight, one of the characteristics of the ECM; this emphasis is due to the fact that “Many in the emerging movement are post-evangelical because they are inherently skeptical of the *‘in vs. out’ mentality* of the evangelical movement.”<sup>14</sup> The emerging church led by Judah accepted that the men of Dan were “in” because they rallied to fulfill God’s mission of social justice concerning the incident of Gibeah. But in accepting the idolaters of the emergent village of Dan they were bringing destruction and judgment upon themselves, and paid an awful price for it.

Israel’s selective obedience to the word of God continues after the final battle is over. The Israelites had sworn an oath not to give any of their daughters to a Benjamite, which left a problem for the 600 surviving Benjamite men. To get wives for them, the Israelites massacred everyone from the town of Jabesh Gilead, a town which had not sent fighters to the battle, except

that 400 virgin girls were spared for the Benjamites. Again, we note that this was what they were supposed to do to the city of Dan, not to Jabesh Gilead, according to Deuteronomy 13. Then, to get wives for the remaining 200 Benjamites, they instruct them to go to Shiloh during the feast and kidnap a daughter of Shiloh for themselves. But kidnaping was the tenth of those ten cases where Israel must put the offender to death to “purge the evil from your midst” (Deut 24:7). Israel goes to war to “purge the evil from your midst,” but then adds their own evils worthy of capital punishment, kidnaping and murder. The narrative, and the book, concludes, “In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Selective obedience to the will of God is just another form of doing what is right in one’s own eyes.

I say again that postmodernism is a philosophical trick to enable men to do what is right in their own eyes. Professing Christians in the ECM adopt some of this philosophy, calling it “soft” postmodernism.<sup>15</sup> It works something like this: we can only partially know the truth as is evident from the fact that Christians have disagreed about truth, the church has made awful mistakes in the past, justifying evil by appeal to Scripture; we know better now, we can have a humble appreciation of our inability to know the truth, thus no one can really say that anyone else is wrong (I exaggerate slightly), we have to go beyond just what people say about what Scripture says. The end result is in reality a neo-neo-orthodoxy in which the Bible somehow contains the word of God but is not to be identified as the word of God, and soft postmoderns can substitute their own ideas of what is right for Scripture’s by denying that Scripture speaks clearly or by finding something that can be read to contradict some unpopular teaching of Scripture (e.g. on women’s ordination), or by denying our ability to understand it. I again point out that our God requires us to understand it and if we do not both understand and practice it, then we are guilty of doing what is right in our own eyes. The very concept of church discipline further implies that we are able to discern if others are doing what is right in their own eyes. I think we can say, then, that while Micah in Judges 17 is a hard postmodernist, the emerging church led by Judah in Judges 19 is soft postmodernist, picking and choosing which commands of God to obey (and ignore). Again we need to remind ourselves that this soft postmodernist church is the product of selfish and treacherous missional leaders who substitute their own mission for the mission of God. Missional leaders who spend their time telling Christians they can’t really understand the truth (or Truth) are not taking their agenda from Scripture: “If you continue in my Word, then you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31–32).

### **The Slide Into Depravity Begins With Unthankfulness**

In Judg 21:3 the Israelites ask, “Why, O LORD, God of Israel, has this come about in Israel, so that one tribe should be missing today in Israel?” A superficial answer is obvious: “One tribe is missing because you just annihilated it!” But if “Why?” means “How did things get to this state of affairs when the emerging church of Benjamin is nearly wiped out as if it were a Canaanite tribe?” which, spiritually speaking, it was, then that is a very good question. What is the answer? Does the narrative give us an answer? The next verse does not give us God’s answer, but I think that later in the chapter the answer is clearly given. Notice the detail with which the Benjamites are given instruction on how to get to Shiloh, where they are supposed to kidnap wives for themselves: “Behold, there is a feast of the LORD from year to year in Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south side of Lebonah” (Judg 21:19). Does it sound to you like these Benjamites have ever been to Shiloh, since they have to be told in such detail how to get there? Every man is supposed to know how to get to Shiloh, since he is supposed to go there three times every year for the LORD’s feasts: Passover/ Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the feast of Booths. It would appear from the instructions that the practice was already reduced to once a year (“There is a feast from year to year”), and it would appear that these Benjamites have never gone at all.

Therefore they had never gone to the Passover feast, the purpose of which was “so that you might remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of Egypt” (Deut 16:3). “Remember the LORD” (Deut 8:18) is Moses’s way of saying “Be thankful to the LORD,” and “They did not remember the LORD” (Judg 8:34) is Scripture’s way of telling us that the Israelites were unthankful for all of God’s blessings to them.

So the fact that these Benjamites had never been to Shiloh indicates that they were unthankful that they grew up as free men in a free land, instead of as slaves in Egypt. They did not care to remember the LORD and all his goodness to them. What is our God’s opinion of those who are not thankful to him? We get an idea from the fact that the death penalty was to be carried out against those who do not care to come to the Passover feast. Num 9:6–13 relates how someone who cannot come to the Passover for a specific reason can make it up the following month, but the one who has no such excuse, “and neglects to observe the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people, for he did not present the offering to the LORD at the appointed time. That man will bear his sin.” Does this begin to answer the question, then, “Why is one tribe missing today in Israel?”

The observation from the book of Judges that the slide into depravity begins with unthankfulness is confirmed by Paul in Rom 1:21–32, who no doubt was thinking of Judges 17–21 as typical of human history, a story repeated many times in many places:

Even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened [postmodernism being just one manifestation of that darkening]. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man [example, Judges 17] ... therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them [example, Judges 19]. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie [in postmodern terms, the lie that we can't know the truth!], and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator [and as we saw in Judges 17, one can worship the creature while giving it the name of the creator, just as emergent Christians can worship their own created Jesus]. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for what is against nature, and in the same way the men also abandoned the natural use of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing the shameless deed [the original intent of the men of Gibeah, Judges 19], and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind [now exemplified in postmodernism; e.g Dale Martin], to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, etc.

Dale Martin, marxist, postmodern, homosexual, in *Sex and the Single Savior*, that book which Brian McLaren finds so useful, would like you to know that Romans 1 should not be used by anyone wishing to adopt a Christian view of homosexuality. This is because, according to Martin, “Paul apparently presupposes a mythological narrative about the origins of idolatry” (p. 53) and “modern people, even Christians, do not believe the mythological structure that provides the logic for Paul’s statements about homosexuality in Romans 1” (p. 55). Let’s hear again what Brian McLaren thinks about this book:

Dale Martin’s important new book shows one of the highest possible kinds of respect for the Bible: he refuses to accept shortcuts and easy answers in the challenging journey of interpretation. His highly nuanced approach cannot be easily categorized but words like ‘formidable’ and ‘insightful’ and ‘ground breaking’ come to my mind. I have spent hours with the book and have learned a lot from it and plan to refer back to it often.

How is unthankfulness demonstrated in the ECM? Think about how privileged we are in this generation with the ability to know God through his word far beyond previous generations. We have multiple Bible translations, helps in learning the original languages

never before available, computer programs to aid Bible study, mp3 players so we can listen to Bible reading while we’re walking, exercising, maybe even working. We have leisure time that few in history have had. We are the most privileged of all people in being able to keep God’s word on our hearts, and how do we respond? We see people in the ECM putting a postmodern fog over the Bible: “Well, we can’t really understand it, you know, it’s all situated communication from the past.” And “scholars” actually spend their time writing books to convince us that we can’t really understand it, so we need to just be humble and accept an “I’m OK you’re OK, invent your own Jesus, he’s OK too” theology. If the tribe of Benjamin was unthankful, I would suggest that they’ve got good competition for the prize of most unthankful.

### **The Slide Into Depravity Doesn’t Take Long**

Even though these two appendices to the book of Judges appear at the end of the book, the events described in them must have happened early in the period of the Judges. This is so because in Judg 20:28 we read that “Phinehas, son of Eleazer, son of Aaron, stood before [the ark] to minister in those days.” That would be the Phinehas who was alive in the wilderness, who took a spear and followed an idolatrous Israelite with his new Midianite girl friend into the tent and put it through both of them, and thus by being zealous with God’s zeal, put an end to the plague from which thousands died (Num 25:1–13). This Phinehas entered the land with Joshua, and was still alive in Judges 20, which means that this great apostasy took place within a single generation. Again, “There arose another generation after them that did not know the LORD, ... They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD” (Judg 2:10, 17). I doubt that anyone who knows only the BTS of today would suspect that 20 years ago the seminary had a reputation as one of the most conservative (faithful to Scripture) seminaries in the country. Today it (along with Dale Martin and heretics like Spencer Burke) enjoys the endorsement of Brian McLaren: “I am genuinely enthusiastic about Biblical’s LEAD MDiv program. Biblical is pioneering a holistic approach to training leaders for tomorrow’s church, and the concept is fantastic.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Havens of Idolaters and Homosexuals**

Above we noted Paul’s warning to the Corinthian church, “Do not be deceived; neither ... idolaters ... nor homosexuals ... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 5:9–10). What is the context? In light of what we have seen from Judges 17–21, it is of note that in Corinth there has been something of a “replay” of the incident of Gibeah and the tolerant reaction of Benjamin. Judg 19:10–15 explains how the Levite and his company

ended up in Gibeah. When they were opposite Jebus (= Jerusalem) his servant suggested that they stop there for the night, but since Jebus at that time was still Canaanite, the Levite said he did not want to spend the night in a foreign city, but would press on to an Israelite city, which is why they came to Gibeah. The irony, of course, is that the legitimate expectation that they would receive better hospitality in Gibeah than in Jerusalem was the opposite of reality, since Gibeah had in effect become like the worst of Canaanite cities, namely, Sodom of Genesis 19. Similarly in the Corinthian church, "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles [e.g. Jebusites], that someone has his father's wife" (1 Cor 5:1). The Corinthians are much like the Benjamites, who, while not participating themselves in the sin of Gibeah, were proud of their toleration of it: "You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst" (v. 2; cf. Judg 20:13). Here it is Paul the Benjamite, whose former namesake (king Saul) came from Gibeah, who insists on biblical action, quoting Moses's tenfold repeated statement in Deuteronomy, just as the Israelites had quoted it to Benjamin so many years before, "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (v. 13; cf. Judg 20:13). Paul thus teaches us how to apply Old Testament laws for which the penalty was capital punishment: in the church, excommunication follows such sin which is not repented of. I am used to hearing from unbelievers such arguments as "Well, you're hypocritical in quoting from the Old Testament on matters such as homosexuality because you're not calling for the death penalty against homosexuals (not to mention idolaters)." I was a bit taken aback to see the same argument used on an Emergent Village blog. Of course, the person making the argument was not necessarily formally connected with emergent village. Anyway, Paul shows us here in 1 Corinthians 5 how to apply such laws in the church. And this is the context for his statement that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

And what are the consequences of not carrying out church discipline? As Paul says, "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1 Cor 5:6). That is, if sin in the church is not taken care of, the church will become a haven for such sinners, just as the Old Testament emergent villages of Dan and Gibeah were havens of idolaters and homosexuals. Some in the ECM think they are wiser than Paul (thus wiser than the Holy Spirit who led him), and want to allow "belonging" to precede "believing."<sup>17</sup> The outcome of such a practice is already written down in Scripture and is thus very predictable. Here is an example taken from a blog (self explanatory as a

modern Micah-Jonathan ben Gershom pair, I think, the blogger being the modern "Micah," who loves Jesus and "all things concerning postmodern Christianity;" my apologies for the profanity):

Unbeknownst to the world, I actually made the decision to become a gay man nearly one year ago. I decided that all of the exercising and fad diets simply were not working for me as a heterosexual. So I tried my hand at being gay.

It was no easy task, let me tell you. It took a lot of training and practice. I started simple - with a few male friends. Whenever I socialized with my male friends, I would regurgitate what would become my mantra for the year: "wow, he has a nice ass!"

It wasn't long before I was getting tipsy with friends and "accidentally" finding myself in compromising situations. Next thing you know, we're back at my place, making out, doing other things not fit for public documentation, then waking up in each other's arms wondering how 2 "straight" guys ended up in bed together.

What's so amazing about the whole ordeal is that being gay has been fabulous for my health! Since January, I've lost nearly 25 pounds! Not to mention that I've gone from Stage I hypertension to a near-normal blood pressure. Moreover, my overall metabolic profile has changed as well, as my lipid (cholesterol) and blood glucose panels have normalized.

That is why I am proud to be a gay man, and am preparing for the day when I shall be among the number to rule the earth.

For all the poor heterosexuals out there, trembling in fear right now from your imminent demise ... do not fret! There is still hope! Choose to be gay. Choose shallowness. Choose cattiness. Choose to revel in that hot best friend's deep, blue eyes and burly biceps. And in so doing, choose life ... and power.

God speed. ...

Anywho, got up today for church, where Brian McLaren continued our "God in the movies" series w/ *March of the Penguins*, and seriously - I just couldn't get through the service w/o crying. Not because of an amazing message or anything - but simply b/c I'm overwhelmed to have found such an amazing, accepting, inclusive, loving community of people.

And it has made all the difference in my life.

Afterwards, Jane and I had the wondrous opportunity to have a private lunch w/ Brian. As you can imagine, any time spent with him is a time of great enlightenment! We talked about a slew of questions that have been burning on my heart lately ... like sexuality, love, universalism, hell, eschatology, etc. Wow. That's really all I can say. He's like the only guy I know that can drop 2 minutes of monologue on you, that leaves you mulling and wrestling for 2 years! Good times.

Anyway, all that to say that life is plodding along as it usually does. And there's some cool stuff shaping up, and there are a lot of scary unknowns lying just around the bend ... but I'm really starting to vigorously believe that Jesus wasn't talking out of his ass when he was speaking about all this "abundant life" business ... that I'm really OK, and I'm being molded into something more and more OK with each passing day. Sometimes, it's the really small blessings in life that unmask the really profound truths.<sup>18</sup>

And now BTS aspires to be the "seminary of choice" to produce missional leaders for such postmodern parishioners, who are the logical outcome of taking Dale Martin's advice (endorsed by Brian McLaren), "We need to move beyond the false claims of modernism that looked to the text of the Bible as a reliable and objective 'source' for knowledge or as a 'foundation' for ethics."<sup>19</sup>

### **Spiritual Problems Need Spiritual Solutions**

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judg 17:6); In those

days there was no king of Israel (Judg 18:1); In those days when there was no king in Israel (Judg 19:1); In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judg 19:25).

What is the point? Many assume the point must be that Israel needed a king. However, in all those places in Deuteronomy where the LORD commanded Israel to do what is right in his eyes, he never said they needed a king to help them do that. Further, Micah in Judges 17 is something of a prototype of Jeroboam, first king of the northern kingdom of Israel after Israel divided in the time of David's grandson. Micah and Jeroboam were both Ephraimites (sad in light of the example of Joshua); Micah set up his idols for his own family, later they were taken to Dan for the city of Dan, but Jeroboam set up his golden calves in both Dan and Bethel, corrupting the whole nation. Micah at least thought that having a Levite as a priest would be a good idea, but Jeroboam excluded the Levites from ministry (2 Chron 11:14; 13:9).

If Micah makes the case for a king, then, it's a pretty poor argument! For kings like Jeroboam were just like Micah, doing what was right in their own eyes and taking the whole nation along with them. What then is the point? The point is simply this: the book is written during a time when Israel has suffered the effects of apostate kings such as Jeroboam in the north, Ahaz in the south, and in such an environment one can easily imagine a believer saying to himself, "We are cursed with these wicked kings who lead the nation astray and keep us from serving God. Everyone does what is right in the eyes of the wicked king. How much better off we would be without these kings. Then we as a nation could serve the LORD." It is as if the writer is saying, "You think your spiritual problems would be solved by getting rid of the kings? I'll show you what it was like when there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes."

The solution to Israel's spiritual problems is neither the monarchy nor the lack of it, but rather that every man do what is right in the sight of the LORD, as Moses commanded, and the key to that happening is for the ministers of God to know and then teach the word of God. Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions. "You have a new world, so you need a new church" is not a spiritual solution. Not biblically spiritual, at least. Postmodern teaching on truth is not merely a cultural phenomenon that can be accommodated, it is an evil way of thinking in those whose hearts are darkened, and must be repented of, and only then may its legitimate aspirations find true fulfillment.

The solution to Israel's spiritual problems (and ours) is given in the LORD's commission to Joshua (Josh 1:7-8):

Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you

go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

It seems to me that Dave Dunbar says pretty much the opposite: "The Bible is not a how-to book to make you and me successful in our Christian lives. That's not what it's about."<sup>20</sup> Clearly God wanted Joshua to know that one of the things the Bible is about, is that knowledge of and obedience to it is in fact a prerequisite for success in our lives.

When I served on board a nuclear submarine we had something called a ship's inertial navigation system which was used to keep track of our position - our latitude and longitude. When you travel around under water it's nice to know exactly where you are, for example if you want to go from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean under water it would be nice to go right through the middle of the Straits of Gibraltar instead of running into the Rock of Gibraltar. Our ship's inertial navigation system worked pretty well - it was basically a bunch of gyroscopes and electronics, and you feed into it an accurate position for a starting point, and it keeps track of your speed, your direction, all the slight turns, slowing down, speeding up, and it tells you all the time what your position is.

But there is a problem with the ships inertial navigation system, and that is simply that at best, the position it gives you is a good guess; there is a circle of uncertainty around the position that it gives you, and as time goes by, that circle grows and grows and grows. So in terms of navigation, the position that is calculated by the inertial navigation system cannot be counted as a fix; it's only an estimated position. Over time, your estimated position is going to be farther and farther from your actual position. You need what in navigation is called a "fix" to correct your estimated position, and so, usually once a watch, four times every day, we would go to periscope depth and stick up a mast when a navigational satellite was passing overhead, and based on the signals we received from that satellite, and the time it passed overhead, we could tell exactly where we were - we would get a fix and we would use that fix to correct our estimated position, to shrink that circle of uncertainty back down.

Now of course we never called this thing our "ship's inertial navigation system." Everything in the Navy gets abbreviated by its initials. So what is the abbreviation of the "Ship's Inertial Navigation System"? SINS. We were running around under the ocean relying on our SINS. Well that's a lot like what's mentioned here in Judges 17-21 - every man did what was right in his own eyes. What's wrong with doing what is right in your own eyes? Because that's relying on our SINS; our own moral compass. If we rely on our own moral compass,

our SINS, we'll be led astray - and we'll crash on the rocks. We need to fix our position by reference to the word of God, and then we need to correct our estimated position. The LORD told Joshua to meditate on the Scriptures day and night, and then he would have success. Four times a day on my ship we used to get a fix and correct our estimated position. In the time I served on board my submarine we never once said - "Let's throw out that satellite fix, and just go by our SINS." And we never sent a message to our headquarters saying, "the satellite fix we just received is a mile away from our position by SINS—please correct the bad information coming from the navigation satellite, because we are sure that our SINS is right." If that happened there would be a message right back from headquarters ordering that the Commanding Officer of the ship be relieved of his duties, because he will not receive correction from the sky.

The people I've been describing from Judges 17–21 did that – Joshua kept them on track by constantly fixing their position according to the word of God, but then they said, "Let's throw out the word of God and just go by our own moral compass," and they just got farther and farther away from where they were supposed to be, until they got to this pitiful place that we see in Judges 17–21.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being my minister. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children (Hos 4:6).

#### Notes:

1. An 11 minute clip of this talk is available on the seminary's website ([www.biblical.edu](http://www.biblical.edu)), beginning with the quote from McLaren.
2. Christopher D. Arendt, "Profiles in Courage: Prof. Dale Martin," <http://www.yale.edu/lt/archives/v7n2/v7n2profilesincourage.htm>
3. Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).
4. John H. Armstrong, "How I Changed My Mind: Theological Method," *Viewpoint* 7/4 (Sep-Oct 2003), p. 4.
5. John R. Franke, *Barth for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).
6. Harvey Cox, "Barth and Berlin: Theology at the Wall," pp. 143–49 of *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). "For me, the step from Barth to liberation theology was a natural and easy one" (p. 148).
7. Brian McLaren, *a Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, 2006). Page numbers cited here are from the paperback (2006) edition.
8. Stan Grenz, *Renewing the Center* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 325; Hans Frei, "Response to 'Narrative Theology: An Evangelical Appraisal,'" *Trinity Journal* 8 (Spring 1987), p. 21. The phrase "generous orthodoxy" was also used in "Word Made Fresh: A Call for the Renewal of the Evangelical Spirit," 2002, signed by 110 scholars, including Grenz and Franke.
9. D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Scot McKnight, "What is the Emerging Church," a paper read at Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, PA, October 26, 2006, pp. 2–3. A more recent version of McKnight's paper was published in *Christianity Today*, February, 2007.

10. Stanley J. Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 27.

11. *a Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 15 (the paperback edition). Virtually identical words are found in *Beyond Foundationalism*, p. 23.

12. For example, Tickle endorsed *What God Has Joined Together? The Christian Case For Gay Marriage* by D. Myers and L. Scanzoni (Harper Collins, 2005).

13. [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian\\_mclaren\\_o.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o.html)

14. McKnight, "What is the Emerging Church," p. 25.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

16. See <http://www.biblical.edu/pages/embark/programs-of-study-master-of-divinity-1.htm> for McLaren's endorsement (still there as of Feb 14, 2007, at least). See Ken Silva, "Brian McLaren and Evangelical Panentheism," [www.apprising.org/archives/2006/01/brian\\_mclaren\\_2.html](http://www.apprising.org/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_2.html) for a discussion of others whose books are endorsed by McLaren. For McLaren's endorsement of Spencer Burke's book (*A Heretic's Guide to Eternity* [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006]), see Brett Kunkle, "Essential Concerns Regarding the Emerging Church," a paper delivered Nov 15, 2006, at the annual convention of the Evangelical Theological Society, and available at [http://www.str.org/site/DocServer/Essential\\_Concerns\\_Regarding\\_the\\_Emerging\\_Church.pdf?docID=1441](http://www.str.org/site/DocServer/Essential_Concerns_Regarding_the_Emerging_Church.pdf?docID=1441), pp. 13–15. Kunkle quotes the following from Burke: "At this point in history, I believe God is to be questioned as much as obeyed, created again and not simply worshipped. Our views must be continually revised, reconsidered, and debated. ... I am not merely seeking to put a new spin on old beliefs; I am actually declaring that there are new ways of believing when it comes to the Christian story. ... I'm not sure I believe in God exclusively as a person anymore either" (Kunkle, "Essential Concerns," p. 13; from Burke, *A Heretic's Guide*, xxii, xxiv–xxv, 195). McLaren comments in the foreword, "even in a book with 'heretic' in the title, I believe any honest reader can find much truth worth seeking" (Kunkle, p. 15, from Burke, p. x). Burke is now banned from teaching at BTS but he taught (facilitated) there at an ETREK course in the Fall of 2004, in connection with which Brian McLaren is listed as a "faculty expert."

17. "I hear many more [in the ECM] speak of a spectrum of faith, degrees of faith, permeable walls that permit 'belonging' before believing" (McKnight, "What is the Emerging Church," p. 25).

18. If interested, the reader can find the blog with google search on the text quoted here, or contact the author. McLaren's gospel-free Penguins sermon that brought our modern Micah to tears can be found at <http://www.crc.org/converse/talks.htm>, or obtained from the author. Perhaps I should point out that the blogger cited here could be spoofing to a greater or lesser extent. Even if that were so, one would still have to ask the question what kind of mind and spiritual state would produce such a "spoof"?

19. A quote from the book provided in promotional materials for *Sex and the Single Savior*, e.g. at <http://www.amazon.com/Sex-Single-Savior-Sexuality-Interpretation/dp/0664230466>.

20. From "Seminary on the Mission." Dunbar goes on to say, "The Bible is a story about a God who is on a mission. The mission is to save, redeem, and reconcile the universe," a statement which raises all sorts of questions related to how the ECM is changing the biblical mission articulated, for example, in the great commission.