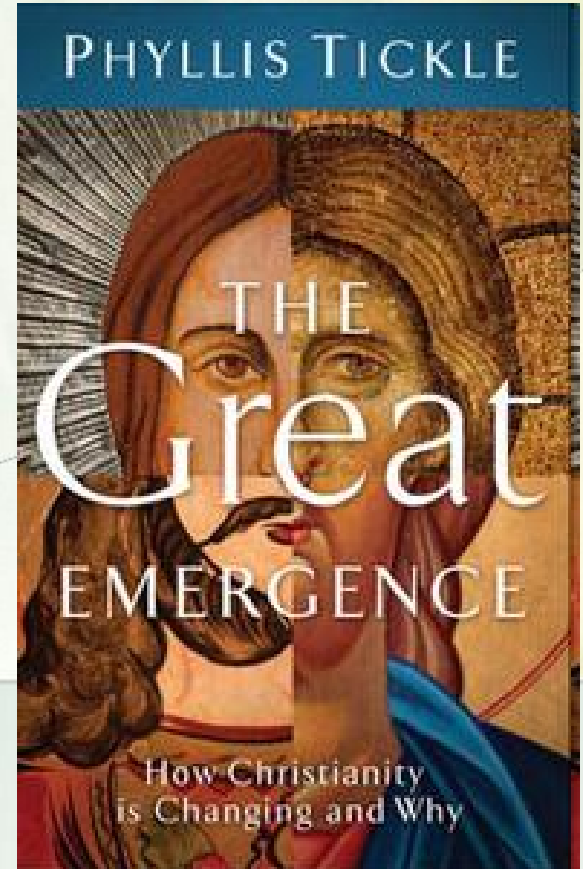


# St. John in the Wilderness

## The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why

From the book by Phyllis Tickle, c. 2008  
by Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI

The Rev. Marilyn Baldwin  
St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church  
White Bear Lake, MN  
June, 2009



# Emergence, Emersion

- The **emerging church** (sometimes referred to as the **emergent movement**) is a Christian movement of the late 20th and early 21st century that crosses a number of theological boundaries: participants can be described as evangelical, post-evangelical, liberal, post-liberal, charismatic, neocharismatic, and post-charismatic. *(Wikipedia)*

# Emerging Church

- Proponents... call it a "conversation" to emphasize its developing and decentralized nature, its vast range of standpoints and its commitment to dialogue. What those involved in the conversation mostly agree on is their disillusionment with the organized and institutional church and their support for the deconstruction of modern Christian worship, modern evangelism, and the nature of modern Christian community. *(Wikipedia)*

# The Great Emergence

- **Part I: *What Is It?***
- **Part II: *How Did It Come To Be?***
- **Part III: *Where Is It Going?***

# Part I: What Is It?

- Changes slipped into our lives somewhat unnoticed, unheralded in late 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Affect every part of our lives
- Interface with/context for all aspects
  - Social
  - Culture
  - Politics
  - Economics

# “The World Is Flat Again”

- Classic economics applies less to service economies than production-based ones
- National borders, loyalties not as strong as before
- Small nations can hold large ones hostage
  - Technology, knowledge have leveled playing field
- Traditional privilege no longer a given

# Examples

- “Information overload” at all levels
  - To-do lists are endless
  - Dependent upon technology outside ourselves for even simple tasks
    - Simple calculations
    - Computer, phone issues disrupt lives
- Where is the line between human and machine?

# How Does This Apply To Religion?

(specifically, North American Christianity)

- *About every five hundred years the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale....*
- *We are living in and through one of those five-hundred-year sales.*
  - Phyllis Tickle, quoting The Rt. Rev. Mark Dyer,  
Retired Anglican Bishop



# Understanding History\*

- Pattern of 500-years helpful to understanding and reassurance
- Empowered structures become unwieldy
- Must be shaken off so that new growth may occur

\* *“Those who do not understand history are doomed to repeat it”* ---George Santayana

# Three Results or Corollary Events

- New, more vital form of Christianity emerges
  - Former dominant form becomes “more pure and less ossified” version of itself
- 

**= *two new creatures where there was one***

- Faith has then spread dramatically into new geographic and demographic areas
  - Increasing exponentially range and depth of Christianity
    - Eg., Reformation forced changes upon Roman Church

# Rummage Sales

## *When the Church Cleans Out Its Attic*

- 500 Years Ago: Great Reformation

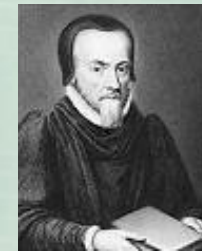
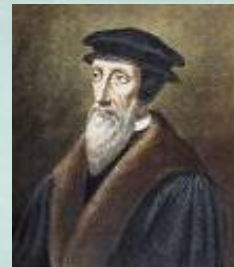
- (16<sup>th</sup> Century) growth in relative importance for religion & culture



- Luther: October 31, 1517

- Others had made rumblings for at least a century
- Other changes went on for at least a century more

- Wycliff, Zwingli, Knox, Calvin, Hooker

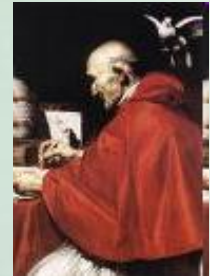


# Rummage Sales (cont.)

- 500 Years Earlier: Great Schism (1054)
  - Cultural, theological, practical differences between Eastern and Western Churches
  - Symbolic habits, rituals, sacred means
    - Eastern: (Constantinople) Leavened bread, Greek language, Spirit descended from God the Father
    - Western: (Rome) Unleavened bread, Latin, Spirit descends from Father and Son (*filioque clause*)
  - Rome excommunicated Constantinople
  - Constantinople declared Rome anathema

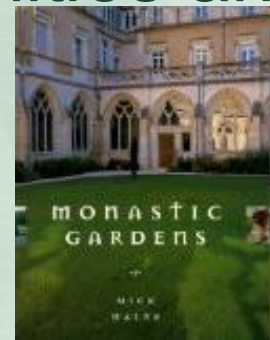
# Rummage Sales (cont.)

- 500 Years Earlier: (Late 6<sup>th</sup> Century)
  - Pope Gregory (I) the Great (590-604)
  - “Cleanup” after the Fall of the Roman Empire (Rome sacked, 410; fell, 476; Senate disbanded in 480)
  - Council of Chalcedon, 451: Issues
    - Nature of Jesus’ Incarnation: divinity vs. humanity
    - Whether Mary was “Mother of God” or of human
      - Eastern, Western, Oriental Christianity



# Gregory and the Monastics

- Growing lawlessness, illiteracy of culture
  - Commoners, minor clergy left with little official religious practice or scriptural study
  - Thanks to Gregory (and Benedict before him)
    - Convents, monasteries became repositories for early treasures of Church and learning
  - Power rested in religious communities and especially their leaders



# First Century CE

- Obviously most important to Christian faith
- Christianity born out of Judaism
  - Birth, public ministry, teachings, crucifixion, Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth changed everything
- Judaism itself forever changed
  - 70 CE Temple destroyed; 130 Jews barred
    - Jews dispersed; epochs of human time redated
    - Much of Church born in those 60 years



# Inner Workings of Rummage Sales

- We are on the cusp of 500-year change
- We are also the product of one, and all those before
- Need to gauge present pain against patterns and gains of previous “hinge times”
- No structure has been lost; only changed by new, not-yet-organized form





# “Re-Traditioning” *Diana Butler Bass*

- Apostolic tradition did not cease to be
  - Canon, Augustinian theology, mysticism still with us
- Monastic tradition did not cease but still influences us
- Roman Catholicism’s power, ritual, and theology still inform us
- Protestant Christianity still important
  - Emphasis on literacy, Scripture

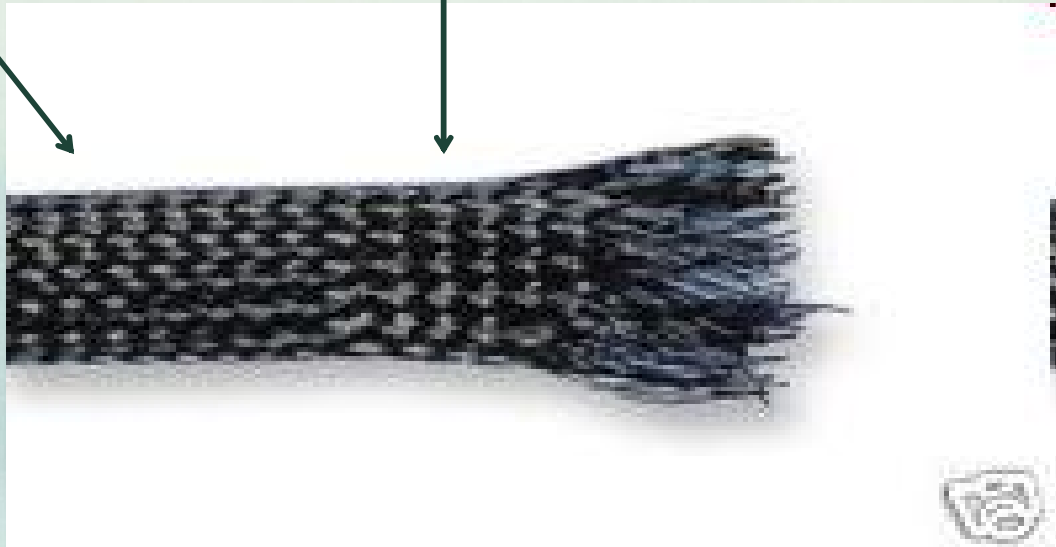
# Broader Upheaval

- Colonized Christianity changing in less-developed countries, cultures
  - More sharing, egalitarian assumptions
- Similar issues in Judaism
  - 500 years BC: Babylonian Captivity, destruction of Solomon's Temple
  - 1000 BC: End of Age of Judges, David's monarch established
    - Great Transformation: Emergence of humanity
- Similarities in Islam? (Shorter history)

# Cable Of Meaning *(after Tickle, p. 35)*

Waterproof covering (history of community)

Mesh sleeve (common imagination)



Spirituality

Corporeality

Morality

# A Holy Tether

- Consider “generic religion” – belief system
- Humanity secured by tether to greater meaning
  - “If there were no god, we would have to invent one”



# Cable Of Meaning Explained

- Waterproof covering = story of community
- Mesh sleeve = common imagination
  - Not necessarily true, but “truth” of community
- Three strands:
  - Spirituality: Naming central experiences & values of individuals and community
  - Corporeality: Physically embodied religion
  - Morality: Application, enactment of values

# Cable To Meaning

- All well as long as cable is intact, suffers no major blow
  - Story and shared illusion are struck a blow simultaneously – major change in culture
  - “Religious duct tape” seals off changes for awhile
    - Healing takes place; new shared values
- Cultural change cycle starts all over again

# The Great Emergence

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