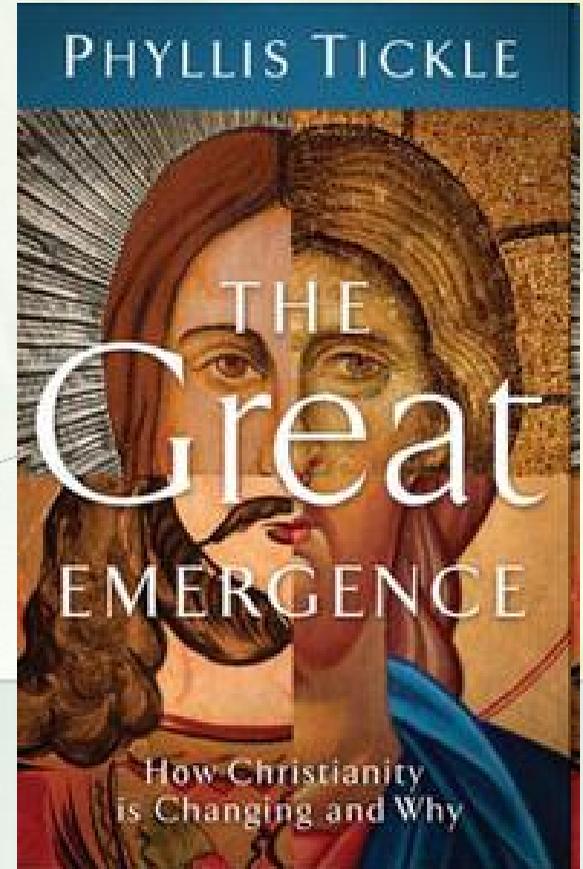


# St. John in the Wilderness

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

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

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# 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 II: How Did It Come to Be?

- Why is it important?
  - Knowing historical parallels:
    - Allows us to more accurately evaluate & address changes
    - Diminishes sense of failure: my/our fault
  - Most recent parallels in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation
    - Makes sense to gain understanding from it

# The Great Reformation: Prequel to Emergence



- Reformation didn't start with Luther's 95 Theses (1517) but much earlier
- 1378: Two men elected Pope
  - Urban VI, Italian
  - Clement VII, French
    - Led to cultural, political, and social upheavals
    - Primacy, stability of Seat of Rome shattered
- Not settled until 1418, after 3 popes vying for power



# Outcome: Two Major Changes

- Destroyed idea that popes are chosen by God to be arbitrator of religion and politics
- Evoked one major question – *always* present in re-formation:

**Where now is the authority?**

- Answer didn't come until Reformation:

***Sola scriptura, scriptura sola***

- Joined later by “priesthood of all believers”

# Advantages of New Authority

- As new source of authority becomes established, chaos gives way to stability
- New changes, requirements come out of new authority
  - *Sola scriptura* required literacy of all
  - Literacy accelerated drive toward rationalism, Enlightenment, ultimately literature, science and technology of today

# Disadvantages of New Authority

- Divisiveness: many different interpretations of same information
  - New denominations, sects proliferate
  - Bloody history of spread of Christianity
  - Disunity of the Body of Christ
  - *Sola scriptura* sets up a “paper pope” in place of human one?

# Further Assaults on Authority

## 1453: Ottoman Turks capture Constantinople

- Greek Orthodox intelligentsia leave Turkey for Europe
  - Brought copies of ancient documents in original languages
  - Possessed ability to read ancient languages
  - Brought scientific and mathematics knowledge from Islamic world
- All contributed to great leap in knowledge and culture in all of Europe: The Renaissance had begun

# Tension and Conflict

- Tensions defined religiously after Islam's founding in 6<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Less defined as far as geography
- Iberian Peninsula (Spain) in 50 years before Luther series of skirmishes
  - Regional kings and Mussulmen (Muslims)
  - Roman Church and Sephardic (Spanish) Jews
  - Catholic monarch's retaking of Spanish culture
    - Cordoba's library had over 400,000 volumes
    - Largest in one place since destruction of Alexandria

# Tension and Conflict (cont'd)

- Ottomans conquered much of southern Mediterranean by 1417
  - Inroads to Europe as far as Vienna for the next century
  - Finally repulsed in 1683
- Caused reconsideration of Church, state, social & economic orders
  - City-states centralized; duchies became states
  - Merchant classes, transportation, warfare all transformed into modern modes

# Rise of Protestantism

- Shifts in loyalties from local lord to distant king
  - Greater independence, responsibility for self
  - Middle class came between ancient aristocracy and peasantry
  - Cash became basis of power
- Protestantism became expression of new world order
- Gave authority to new order by “sacramentalizing” important occurrences

# Rummage Sale – Hinge Time Changes



- Characterized by/informed by
  - Increasing restraints upon/outright rejections of
    - Pure capitalism
    - Mainline Protestantism's loss of demographic base
    - Changes in nuclear family
    - Shift from cash to information as base of power
    - Demise of nation-state & rise of globalization

# Influence of Gutenberg

- Wycliffe, (d.1388) others argued for presenting Scripture in common language
- Gutenberg's printing press (1440) and subsequent inventions made it available
- Also allowed Luther's documents, others to be distributed far and wide
- Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton theories disseminated
  - Called into question previously unquestioned

# Rethinking Church Authority

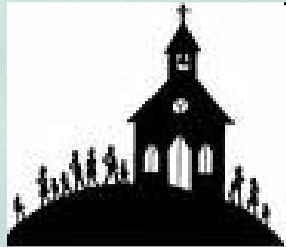
- “3-level universe” proven wrong by Columbus
  - Where were God, Heaven?
- Was the Church capable of being wrong?
  - Simply, Yes
- Common story now broken
  - Search for new meaning, adjusted story

# New Answers To Old Questions

- Open to question/change:
  - Number and order of sacraments
  - Role of faith and works in salvation
  - Buying of church positions and forgiveness
  - Nature of Communion; proper prayer
  - Timing of baptism
  - Numbering, definitions of Commandments
- Luther/Reformation opened door to more changes – not final questions

# Counter-Reformation: Roman Response

- Luther, others originally envisioned changed Church, not split
- Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17) within Roman Church pushed for changes
  - Doctrine and practice clarified
    - Devotions, indulgences, Purgatory
    - Training of priests, appointments, factions cleared up



# Seeking Hegemony

Def: *Leadership; pride of place*

- Drive to war in several areas
  - Spanish & Italian Inquisitions
  - Thirty Years' War (1618-48) involved much of Europe over Roman/Protestant control
  - English Civil War (1641-51)

# Questions of Re-Formation: Darwin, Freud, and the Power of Myth

- Modern Science as major challenge to story and imagination in place since post-Reformation
  - Darwin's *Origin of Species*, 1859
  - Faraday, Field Theory, 1851
    - Electromagnetic rotations and induction
      - Principles on which generators and transformers work
      - No “ether” or “matter” as such
      - Light not from angels but a natural phenomenon
- Changed ways of thinking, being, believing

# Questions of Re-Formation (Cont'd)

- Freud: Opened questions of mind and self
- Jung: Extended explorations of self, collective unconscious; influenced others
- Campbell: Disestablished Christian “doctrine of particularity” and “exclusivity”
- New mass communication technologies made information available to all
  - Telegraph, radio, mass news, TV

# Theological Changes: Reactions

- 1895: Conference of Conservative Protestants meet
  - Formulate principles of belief: Fundamentals
- 1950's on: pioneering education, discussion via TV, common culture
  - Bishop Sheen
  - Televangelists
  - Joseph Campbell: What of *solus christus* and *sola scriptura*?

# The New Self

- Old theory of “self” existing somewhere in brain
- Newer ideas of self merging with artificial intelligence: existential questions
  - Self/brain/mind/I/soul/prayer/God/existence
- Each time of reformation has same question:
  - Where now is the authority?
  - No answers = individual, societal chaos

# Two Questions of Great Emergence

- What is human consciousness – what makes us human?
- How can we live as religious persons in a world of many religions?
  - We cannot have truly entered into stability until we have answered both questions
  - Both questions are in widespread, open discussion
- All participants are products of 20<sup>th</sup> Century; major cultural changes must be examined

# The Century of Emergence:

## *Einstein, Autos, and Marginalization of Grandma*

- Einstein dominates 20<sup>th</sup> Century in many areas, including religion
  - 1905: Published 4 papers that changed our “consensual illusion” forever
    1. **Quanta or bundles of light proven - later quantum physics - no angels, but natural laws**
    2. **Brownian motion described quantitatively - proof of molecular activity - proof of existence of atoms**
    3. **Special Theory of Relativity - no absolutes in space or in time - all depend on observer**
    4. **Matter and energy not separate but equivalent ( $E=mc^2$ )**

# Heisenberg and Uncertainty

- Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle came out of Theory of Relativity
  - “Uncertainty” the only fact that could be accepted as fact in both popular mind and academics
    - Literary deconstruction: no absolute truth – all relative to the perceiver
    - All writing – sacred or secular – has no innate meaning outside of reader



***Battle of The Book***

# Looking for the Real Jesus

- *Sola scriptura* already damaged before Einstein or Heisenberg
  - “*What if Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus of Western history are not the same?*” Reimarus, 1770’s
  - “*The Quest for the Historical Jesus,*” Schweitzer, 1901 – marks the end of an era and opening of another
  - Midcentury finds and methods changed how most view the Gospels
    - Jesus seen as much as guru and sage as God

# More Einstein, more outcomes:

- 1915-16: *General Theory of Relativity*
  - Understanding of time as a fourth dimension, capable of slowing
  - Ongoing expansion of universe; Big Bang
  - Human space exploration
  - Biblical literalism based on inerrancy given a blow
  - Divine authority of Scripture decentralized, turned into “pick-and-choose bazaar”

***Where now is our authority?***

# Enter Pentecostalism

- 1906: Black LA preacher's new doctrine that Spirit gifts are accompanied by speaking in tongues
  - Azusa Street Revival spread like wildfire in US and world
    - 2006: 500 million Pentecostalists – 2<sup>nd</sup> only to RC
  - Church of all classes, races, genders
  - Worship style influenced others, especially evangelicals

# Beginnings of Pentecostalism

- African-American community was largest “untheologized” community spirituality
- Black spiritual experience and contact with divine have been central since before Azusa Street; mainstream since then
- Assumes direct contact with God and direct agency of Holy Spirit
  - Spirit takes precedence over Scripture
  - First answer to “Where is authority?” - Spirit
  - ¼ of emergents are Pentecostal by heritage or affinity

# Leaving Grandma in the Rearview Mirror

- 1908: First popular mass-produced US car
  - Freed Americans from ties to home, family, community, church
  - Changed Sabbath forever to Sunday: shopping, errands, sports took precedence over church and family gatherings
  - “Grandma” was enforcer of biblical learning, church attendance, generational ties



# The Influence of Karl Marx

- Published *Communist Manifesto* in 1848
  - Built on ideas of Hegel: *dialectical materialism*
    - Opposites exist only when in opposition
    - When conflict is resolved, the two synthesize
    - All of life is a *becoming*, never a *being*
    - All creation part of some Absolute that is becoming
  - Marx: State must be supreme; all other forms of authority must cease to exist for people to thrive
    - *Das Kapital*, 1867: Owners always looking to make goods more cheaply on the backs of workers
      - Workers would revolt, which must be prevented
      - State should own all things, keeping ownership from individuals

# Marx's Influence (cont'd)

- Communist/socialist authority in conflict with religion and Reformation concepts
  - Human responsibility, worth, purpose
- Others argued for a proto-secular humanism: what is best for most
- Midcentury churches took over in socializing young
  - Building programs for meeting halls, gyms encouraged uniformity of belief
  - Not same as belief in God

# The Spiritual Strand and A.A.

- Children of 40's, 50's “spiritual but not religious”
- Growth of AA, other groups after 1935 encouraged people to “choose your own concept of God/Higher Power”
  - Leap from doctrinal to experiential
  - Wounded as better healers than experts, authorities, clergy
  - Revived small-group dynamic

# Strangers and Countrymen

- 1965 Immigration and Nationality Services Act passed
  - Long memories of cheap labor imported from other countries; Asians targeted
  - Wars opened Asia to US; later, US to Asian immigrants
- By end of Great Depression, Americans primarily urban with time and opportunities
  - Free time leads most to awareness of self, internal experience

# A New Religion

- Most mainline Christianity gave no religious vocabulary or practices
- Asian immigrants brought Buddhism
  - Rich narrative of wisdom experience
  - Tranquil meditative tools “unencumbered by theism”
    - “Insinuated itself” into Christian and Jewish practice
  - Journey of the spirit did not require the baggage of religion

# The Drug Age

- For some, drugs offered different reality and adjusted perception of subjectivity
- Again, American culture had taught little or nothing about spirituality
  - Experimentation became a way to encounter mystery, experience
  - Questioned nature of consciousness, further disorienting participants
  - “Clear trajectory from Timothy Leary to the Great Emergence”

# The Erosion of *Sola Scriptura*

- Years leading to Civil War had caused Scripture to be questioned by slavery opponents
  - Freedom, equality legally guaranteed if not personally
- WWI and II called gender equity into question
  - Women got the vote; seeds of Women's Movement planted
  - Divorce hurdle was overcome
  - Ordination of women, episcopacy
  - Gay rights as last challenge to biblical literalism

**When last fight is won, where will be the authority?**

# The Corporeal Strand

- Protestantism codified as a set of beliefs
- Religious sensibilities that have assumed body, form, & power = *CORPOREAL*
- Often exhibited in fights over hymnals, biblical translations, rituals
- Race/gender/sexual preference have crossed barriers to become cultural fights
  - May be a sign we are nearing the end of focus on corporeal, perhaps to begin with moral

# The Moral Strand

- *Roe v. Wade* often cited as first sign of moral question: What defines human?
- Jack Kevorkian, “mercy killing”
- Terry Schiavo was most recent major case to question difference
  - Inflict vs. permit death
- Questions still open and debated

# Technological Advances

- Roman Catholic leadership
  - ¼ of today's emergents are of Roman Catholic background
  - Impact of Vatican I & II on all of Christianity
    - I: Papal Infallibility; origin, role of Scripture
    - II: Ecumenism, interfaith dialogue, theology of religion
- Medical advances & ethical questions
  - Beginning & end of life issues

# Technological Advances (cont'd)

- Impact of personal music devices
  - Changed expectations from performed to participatory music
- Changes in political boundaries, loyalties
  - Money no longer sole basis of power
  - Information now holds power in most cases
- Religious experience has moved from sacred to secular to electronic space
  - Internet connects without hierarchy, yet disconnects from local community

# Technological Advances (cont'd)

- Enables “priesthood of all believers” in ways the Reformers could not imagine
  - Huge implications for emergents
    - Opens information to all
    - Opens dis-information as well
    - No mentoring, formation, credentials
- Rise of “aggressive atheism” in response to worldwide connectedness
  - Theodicy of natural and human-caused disasters, wars

# Rosie the Riveter

- Mobilization of troops and materials for WWII required women in war mfg. jobs
  - Over 20 million women worked in defense
    - Others cared for their children, did other related work
- Peace sent most back to domestic oblivion
  - Restiveness from having had power
  - New technologies left much time, little to do
  - Role expectations of returning GIs, wives differed

# Rosie the Riveter (cont'd)

- Rosie increased social life in acceptable ways
  - Telephone contacts
  - Church volunteer work, fellowship
- Young women had memory of a different upbringing – power of women
  - Domestic, work, and social life would change forever as they came to adulthood



# Family Reconfigured

- 1960: Birth control pill changed women's options
  - Family planning
  - More equality in jobs
  - Smaller, later families
  - Two-income families
  - Child care elsewhere
  - Loss of mother role, traditional family



***Where now is the basis for our social order?***

# Scripture's Place

- GenX children no longer learned bible stories, morality at home
  - Scriptural ignorance results in two possibilities:
    - Some eagerly seek engagement with it
    - Others ignore, avoid it – “send to attic” with antiques

Where is this all going?

# The Great Emergence

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