

Emerging or Submerging? Part 4

This is the fourth in a continuing series exposing the Emergent Movement's false doctrines.



BY PASTOR BRIAN BRODERSEN

You have magnified Your word above all Your name. Psalm 138:2b

Jesus said in John 17, **“Your word is truth.”** And as mentioned in previous articles, one of the distinctives of Calvary Chapel is that we hold the Bible to be the true, inerrant, authoritative Word of God.

Rob Bell, like many leaders of the Emergent Movement, says that he believes in the inspiration of the Bible (27), yet his views on the Bible are not the same as those who hold to the historic Christian faith. Consider what he says:

The Christian faith is mysterious to the core. It is about things and beings that ultimately can't be put into words. Language fails. And if we do definitively put God into words, we have at that very moment made God something God is not (32).

In contrast, John 1:1 says, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** Rob says God is not words. God says He is the Word. Amazing!

Some of Rob's arrogance and hostility toward biblical inerrancy and authority come out in these quotes:

I think the Bible is the most amazing, beautiful, deep, inspired, engaging collection of writings ever. ... But sometimes when I hear people quote the Bible, I just want to throw up (42).

In many Christian settings, people are even encouraged to read the Bible alone, which is a new idea in church history (52).

I don't think that any writers of the Bible ever intended people to read their letters alone (53).

When you hear people say that they are just going to tell you what the Bible means, it is not true. They are telling you what they think it means. They are giving their opinions about the Bible (54).

To think I can just read the Bible without reading any of my own culture or background or issues into it and come out with a “pure” or “exact” meaning is not only untrue, but it leads to a very destructive reading of the Bible that robs it of its life and energy (54).

It is poems and stories and letters and accounts ... They aren't first and foremost timeless truths (62).

All of these statements are laced with both theological liberalism and postmodernism. “We can't understand the Bible. We can't ever properly interpret it.” That is a postmodernistic take on language and words. Postmodernism says there is no absolute truth. Although Rob Bell probably wouldn't stand up in his church and say, “there is no absolute truth,” what he would say is, “I do not believe that anybody can know absolute truth.” So it's the same difference, practically. One says there is no such thing as absolute truth; the other says, if there is

absolute truth, no one can know it. What Rob and other Emergent thinkers and writers fail to accept is that this book, the Bible, is a living book. The words of Jesus are going to outlast the material universe itself. They have as much relevance today as they did at the time they were written, as Jesus Himself said, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away”** (Matthew 24:35).

Now we would agree that it's important to understand the Scriptures in their original context. But we would not agree that that is the exclusive application, meaning that the Scriptures basically applied to early Christians in their cultural context but they don't necessarily apply to us in ours. We believe that the application of Scripture is essentially the same from generation to generation. As Jude said, the faith was once for all time delivered to the saints (see Jude 3). Apostolic doctrine is the same for all time!

Another one of Rob's erroneous claims is that personal Bible reading was unheard of until modern times. He promotes the idea that back in the apostolic period nobody really had personal access to the Scriptures and very few people could actually read. Not only is Rob a bad theologian, he's a poor historian as well. Cultures dating all the way back to Abraham's time were literate cultures, some with massive libraries containing thousands of volumes. Of course, there were variations from culture to culture, but the Hebrew as well as the Greco/Roman cultures were literate. The biblical assumption

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is that people had access to the Scriptures and could read them. **“Blessed is the man ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night”** (Psalm 1:1a-2). New Testament writers all spoke as though everybody had access to these truths, which of course, they did.

Let me conclude with this thought: Postmodernism's claim that there is no absolute truth blatantly contradicts the word of Jesus who not only said that He was the truth but also said that those who continued in His Word would know the truth, and the truth would set them free (see John 8:31-32). Either Rob Bell and others like him who ascribe to this view have never read those verses, or maybe they have and just don't believe them. ☞

**All quotes by Rob Bell are taken from Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).*