

This is an excerpt and “added to” [edited more recently] excerpt of my last chapter of a proposed book that will never be (my professional writing is atrocious). The title of the chapter is:

- [Emergen\[t\]cy - Investigating Post Modernism: Who Do You Say I Am Rob Bell?](#) (pp. 6-10)

Learning Curves

Before continuing, I want to challenge the reader who has already made up their mind regarding the emerging movement to allow me to be conversant with them. All people in my opinion should be introduced to debate, two sides of any topic or subject. This is sometimes the best way one can come to an understanding regarding evidence a particular subject has or lacks. This is, in fact, what the pro-life movement wants; a presentation of all the facts, confident that once viewed the young mother will choose life much more often. Debate typically sheds light on positions that often are ignored or hard to digest. A prime example is me.

My pre-Christ life would make the chief of sinners, Paul, wag his head (1 Tim 1:15); my post-Christ life would make Moses break the tablets a second time. During *seasons* in my life as the Holy Spirit points me towards maturity, often dragging me kicking and screaming, I have firmly believed in an aspect of reality one way -- and then when presented evidence that is contrary to what I first believed I will often change my position with deep contemplation or the proverbial *smack* across the back of the head. Nature, history, truth, theology, aspects of reality, etc., all these positions changed under direction of the Holy Spirit via God’s Word and the Body of Christ, the book of nature, and Christian luminaries (if there is such a thing). One example I can give specifically are my positions concerning history and eschatology.^[1]

As a renewed Christian just out of the L.A. County jail system,^[2] I became immersed in everything to do with Jesus *Second Coming*. Often this type of intense study will lead to the idea that there is a secret cabal pulling the strings of history behind such organizations as the Trilateral Commission, the Council of Foreign Relation, the Bilderbergers, Illuminati, Masons (Freemasons), Skull and Bones, and the like. I am sure that most reading this have seen the movie *The Da Vinci Code*, the same thinking by conspiratorial advocate, Ralph Epperson, follows:^[3]

The Accidental View of History: historical events occur by accident, for no apparent reason. Rulers are powerless to intervene.

The Conspiratorial View of History: historical events occur by design for reasons that are not generally made known to the people.^[4]

Mr. Epperson continues by comparing two quotes with this idea in mind:

Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor.... [wrote]: "History is much more the product of chaos than of conspiracy.... increasingly, policy makers are overwhelmed by events and information."Franklin D. Roosevelt who certainly saw many monumental events occur during his consecutive administrations. President Roosevelt has been quoted as saying: "In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, it was planned that way."^[5]

This immersion eventually led me to meet regularly with a group of John Birch Society members.^[6] I read many books on the *New World Order*, which is intimately entwined with the conspiratorial view of history. A few years later I came across a Jewish radio talk show host who on every full moon would only allow callers who believed in this type of history. He called the show on that day *Conspiracy Day Show*, and it was not until I heard debate and opposition to my view that I began to weigh the evidence for it. Or lack thereof. In the end, my interpretation of history collapsed under the weight of the evidence. I do not want this to escape the reader, as, this will lead to a more fruitful discussion of the topic at hand - primarily, the postmodern view of history, theology, and ultimately truth. I mentioned just a moment ago "debate." The *American Heritage Dictionary* ^[7] defines debate as:

1. To consider something; deliberate.
2. To engage in argument by discussing opposing points.

Black's Law Dictionary ^[8] defines *deliberate*, a word used in the *American Heritage Dictionary* definition, as:

1. Intentional; premeditated; fully considered.
2. Unimpulsive; slow in deciding.

You see, it was not until I heard true debate on the topic of whether history was guided by an ill-intentioned cabal or not that I even considered revising my position. This debate allowed me time to *deliberate* and *meditate* on the issue causing a healthier picture of history to immerge based on all -- or at least more -- of the historical information available. Pride, selfishness, shoddy thinking, presuppositions, (in other words -- our nature), will get in the way of us coming to conclusions in our life that could have saved us time, energy, feelings hurt, friends and family lost, as well as faith destroyed... ours - or others around us. Another point worth mentioning is during this time of formulation, deliberation, and reformulation -- I was still *saved* in the fullest sense of the word. Jesus and His sacrificial covering of my sins were not affected by my peripheral eschatological viewpoints; no matter how disjointed it made my life. My unhealthy view of history and my subsequent forcing of Biblical passages to fit that unhealthy view did not affect the person and deity of Christ.

Space to Grow

The question becomes this: *What is the church's role in all of this?* When we are too compulsive in some areas of our life but too slow in deciding on matters that would speed up healthy living, is it the church's responsibility to fly in -- red cape and all -- and point fingers? On the other hand, should it be the church's role to provide orthodox teaching of the truths of the Bible, making clear what the pulpit teaches... with love.^[9] I believe it to be the latter. Another aspect here to keep in mind is that there are misunderstandings on what a person needs to believe, and at what time during their journey. We are not all robots made identical so that the Holy Spirit can move us along on the same path in the same time period.^[10] Ravi again clears up this thinking in his patented cogent way after asked a question by a student at a Q&A forum at Georgia University:

What does it take to be a Christian? I would tell you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that God raised him from the dead... you - with your heart and mind - trust in Jesus Christ. You are a believer. *What does it take to come and belong to your church?* If you join the church where I am a member now, there are certain doctrinal beliefs that you have to believe. For example: You cannot believe that the bible is 90% rubbish and 10% good and still be a member of the church... you can't do that. There are certain doctrines you are committed to, there is a certain code of conduct you are committed to. If you belong to a community of believers, it is not just a belief in Christ, but also a certain community expression of that belief that you are submitted to. *What does it take to teach at Whitcliff-Hall Oxford University?* Now you have to add even more than that. So with each line of affiliation you put the plus - plus - plus. Not because the second or the third make you a Christian, but it places upon you a greater accountability and responsibility as a dispenser of truth to which you are held accountable by a community of believers.^[11]

The newer believer needs a place where the concerns of life and faith can safely be expressed and which will allow them to grow in the understanding of their faith and what God has planned for their lives, better influencing the world around them. Only as the believer is immersed in a healthy-well-balanced church and community can conversation/debate with fellow trusted believers start to zero in on certain mistruths and myths held by many regarding our faith and history. The reason for this critique.

It is possible for a person to view the historicity of the virgin birth, for instance, with skepticism and disbelief and still be saved in the truest sense of the word, as I was regarding my view on eschatology. However, as the believer matures in his or her understanding of faith, such an issue grows in importance. The mature believer should keep in mind that intently focusing on a doctrinal issue too early in a believer's walk may not create dialogue or understanding as much as tension and misunderstanding. This brings me full circle to the topic at hand, that is, as the person moves up the scale of understanding, say, to the level of a pastor, what is his level of understanding and teaching *expected to be*? Is the virgin birth an event that is key to *who* (and

thusly, *what*) Christ claimed to be? Is it a doctrine we can forego in our panoply of beliefs? Is the issue and way Christ was born worth defending or pronouncing as a historical fact? Is it a unique event? What about some of the other doctrines, such as the Trinity and Resurrection, how important are these? I hope to answer some of these questions here. Before I do, however, I must discuss this issue in light of who I am contrasting these views with. In this case, it is Rob Bell.

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Eschatology* - "Study of the 'last things' or the end of the world." Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), cf. *eschatology*, 92.

[2] I am an ex-con from 20[+] years ago... in case you didn't follow the footnotes in chapter one.

[3] The following book I would no longer recommend for reading, but find it useful to define this view.

[4] A. Ralph Epperson, *The Unseen Hand: An Introduction to the Conspiratorial View of History* (Tucson, AZ: Publius Press, 1985), 6.

[5] *Ibid.*, 7.

[6] John Birch was a brash and sometimes controversial figure in history who died near the end of WWII, most would argue as a hero. The society that was founded in his name was at first concerned primarily with possible infiltration into our government by communist sympathizers. The organization metamorphosed over the years into what we find today, an organization that would posit that this infiltration is more than merely a communist infiltration, which was bore out as true (see for instance: M. Stanton Evans, *Blacklisted By History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy* [New York, NY: Crown Forum, 2007]). Today, however, the John Birch Society has had issues published of its monthly magazine that would take the position, for instance, that the United States Government was intimately involved in the Oklahoma City bombing of the Murrah Federal Building (see for instance: William F. Jasper, "Proof of Bombs and Cover-up," *The New American* 14, no. 15 [July 1998]: 10-15.). They would believe that our government took down the Twin Towers, as I would have believed if this event took place 15-years ago. Moreover, they would posit that this infiltration and planned corruption and control of society goes back through most epochs of history to the mystery religions. The Revolutionary War, WWI, WWII, the Vietnam War, as examples, were all started by plan and years of preparation to entrench even more the power of these "controllers of history."

[7] *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), cf. *debate*, 468.

[8] 7th ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Group, 1999), cf. *deliberate*, 438.

[9] John MacArthur via: R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, and Ligon Duncan field audience questions from a Ligonier conference held back in 2008 titled, "[Tough Questions Christians Face.](#)" (Excerpt on my [RUMBLE](#). The full video can be [found here](#) – last accessed 12-4-2023.)

... we have a doctoral statement at our church and it's 14/15 pages long. We call it what we teach. We don't call it what we believe because we don't all believe it yet. [...] We don't say to someone you have to sign this doctrinal statement to come into this church. Because I don't want to spend my whole life. Preach in what I believe to people who already believe it. That is redundant. I know all these people are in process. All we want to have people say is, are you willing to submit yourself to the instruction that's going to be built on this? So, I think it's the, it's being irenic (conducive to peace). It's being gracious. It's following the patience of Christ as he endeavored to communicate with his apostles, who were blockheads. As we all know. And he was going back over the same thing again and again. [...] I think it's patience and love, it's the 1st Corinthians 13 [...] attitude, and it's [...] there's a side of me that only you know [me through]: you hear a sermon and you read a book. And you, you would think maybe that Grace Church was a pretty hardnosed place. Our doctrine is clear, and we don't hesitate to proclaim it. But the church should be pervaded by the patient love of its leadership, to let people be in the process, that the spirit of God is working in their hearts, with the truth being taught to them, to bring them to that place of conviction. If you go into a church and slam dunk Reformed theology on people's heads, you're going to cause a fight because people have reason to believe what they believe. Somebody told them this was the truth of God and it's sacred to them. And there's definitely a process in letting people move along. And you want to make sure that that there's openness and generosity and graciousness. In the proclamation of these truths without wavering on the truths themselves.

[10] I wanted here to reference a beautiful story that some will recognize when they see it, as, it comes from the “king” of evidential apologetics., Josh McDowell. Josh finishes off his rational, historical, fact based argument with his most important chapter. It details the experiential impact that God had on his life, and in this presentation there is more weight to the changes wrought by Calvary than in the previous 12 fact filled chapters. In it, you can see that it took Josh almost 18 months to shake his skepticism and embrace what God had planned for him; in his Father’s case it was almost instantaneous. Let’s read, remember, it is Josh speaking:

I hated one man more than anyone else in the world—my father. I hated his guts. I was mortified that he was the town alcoholic. If you're from a small town and one of your parents is an alcoholic, you know what I mean. Everybody knows. My high school friends would make jokes about my father's drinking. 'They didn't think it bothered me because I fell in with the joking and laughed with them. I was laughing on the outside, but let me tell you, I was crying on the inside. I would go to the barn and find my mother beaten so badly she couldn't get up, lying in the manure behind the cows. When we had friends over, I would take my father out to the barn, tie him up, and park his car behind the silo. We would tell our guests he'd had to go somewhere. I don't think anyone could hate a person more than I hated my father. About five months after I made that decision for Christ, a love from God entered my life so powerfully that it took that hatred, turned it upside down, and emptied it out. I was able to look my father squarely in the eyes and say, “Dad, I love you.” And I really meant it. After some of the things I'd done to him, that really shook him up. After I transferred to a private university, a serious car accident put me in the hospital. When I was moved home to recover, my father came to visit me. Remarkably, he was sober that day. But he seemed uneasy, pacing about the room. Then he blurted out, “Son, how can you love a father like me?” I answered, “Dad, six months ago I despised you.” Then I shared with him the story of my research and conclusions about Jesus Christ. I told him, “I have placed my trust in Christ, received God's forgiveness, invited him into my life, and he has changed me. I can't explain it all, Dad, but God has taken away my hatred and replaced it with the capacity to love. I love you and accept you just the way you are.” We talked for almost an hour, and then I received one of the greatest thrills of my life. This man who was my father, this man who knew me too well for me to pull the wool over his eyes, looked at me and said, “Son, if God can do in my life what I've seen him do in yours, then I want to give him the opportunity. I want to trust him as my Savior and Lord.” I cannot imagine a greater miracle. Usually after a person accepts Christ, the changes in his or her life occur over a period of days,

weeks, months, or even years. In my own life the change took about six to eighteen months. But the life of my father changed right before my eyes. It was as if God reached down and flipped on the light switch. Never before or since have I seen such a dramatic change.

Josh and Sean McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter, revised and updated ed.* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 163-165.

[11] This is from a short excerpt I uploaded to my [YOUTUBE](#) during a Q&A with Ravi Zacharias.