

Author says time ripe for another upheaval

New form of Christianity will emerge from chaos, Phyllis Tickle says

BY ANN BYLE

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KENTWOOD — Phyllis Tickle's new book traces the great "hinge" times in history — about every 500 years — then points straight at today as another time of upheaval in church history.

"What is coming up out of the chaos is a new form of Christianity," said Tickle, discussing "The Great Emergence" in a talk last week at Baker Book House in the finale of the season's Friday Night Series. "It's nothing to be alarmed about, but something to be informed about."

Tickle makes several distinctions. First is that her book isn't about the emergent or emerging church move-

ment, although that movement is part of the "great emergence."

"That 'emergent church' vocabulary confuses the issue and is probably going away soon," she said. "I'm not emergent. I believe there is only one way of salvation through Jesus Christ. If God wants to apply that in different ways, that's up to him."

Second, her book outlines the changes only as they relate to church history. What happened in the past and is happening today is about economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological shifts as well, she said.

She credited Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Karl Marx, Pentecostalism, the automobile, even Alcoholics Anonymous, for pushing modern North American society — religious and secular — toward the changes occurring.

"What's been lost is a sense of the natal church," Tickle

said. "Natal boundaries disappear and the hierarchy then disappears. The church is no longer organized by clergy but by the Internet. All traditions begin to blend together."

This form of Christianity is acreedal (followers don't have to believe certain things, give voice to them, then act on those beliefs), eschews rules and authority and is all about community, Tickle said.

Sure, she says, there is counter reaction to these trends. She compares the 9 percent to 13 percent who fight these changes to "the brakes on a racing car."

"Beyond the traditionalists, though, everyone is engaged with this change in some way," Tickle said. "It's the first time in history we've been connected enough to know what we're going through."

At issue is where authority lies. Martin Luther's break from the authority of the Ro-



PRESS PHOTO/HOLLYN JOHNSON

New form coming: Phyllis Tickle displays her book "The Great Emergence," about the changes of Christianity.

man Catholic Church 500 years ago led him to place authority in Scripture alone. But modern society doesn't recognize the Bible as inerrant and an authority, Tickle said.

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