

News and Current Events :: Pastor Offers a Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional

Pastor Offers a Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional - posted by tjsservant (), on: 2009/10/15 20:32

Article originally posted at The Christian Post

The traditional church and the emerging church can't seem to get along.

They're often hostile to each other and denounce the other side in their writings and at conferences. But one insider to both sides has made the effort to listen to both positions without cherry picking arguments and bring some understanding to the debate.

"I just felt like nobody was listening," Jim Belcher, author of *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional*, told The Christian Post.

Although criticisms have been thrown left and right for more than a decade, neither side was being fairly represented and attacks were being made using the most extreme cases or worst-case scenarios, Belcher notes in his book.

Just as Calvinism cannot be defined solely by the unfortunate event of the burning of the heretic Servetus or by the claim that John Calvin was a theocrat, the emerging church cannot be narrowed to Brian McLaren or to the denial of truth and the traditional church cannot be solely linked to fundamentalism or sectarianism.

"Anytime if we're going to persuade someone we have to listen well and we have to represent them in a way that they would recognize, not the way the critics would recognize," Belcher said.

Article continues (<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20091015/deep/index.html>) here

Re: Pastor Offers a Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional - posted by Compton (), on: 2009/10/16 2:45

Thanks for the article TJServant.

This pastor is not the first to hope that a pragmatic dialectic approach will ease the tension between opposing ideas. Unfortunately this strategy is the very downgrade that bible believing Christians have been concerned about whenever liberal theology tries to make inroads into their churches.

Ultimately, Belcher's entire premise is not a third way, but a post-modern and emergent way. Even to label bible believing Christians as "traditional" is an emergent slur; it's accepts the erroneous premise that all evangelical theology is merely traditional preference and not worth believing in if it divides us.

It is wishful thinking to say that the emergent church can't be reduced to it's basic platform of higher criticism of scripture. I can come alongside an emergent, and together we can light incense candles, sing songs on bean bags instead of pews, and share stories from our journey's; but I won't make this emergent fella happy until I start deconstructing essential bible doctrine with him. If I could get him to move away from his core presupposition that all bible doctrines are nothing more than cultural traditionalism, he would no longer be emergent! Likewise, if he could get me to start looking down on scripture through my intellectual nose, I would be forced to default to an emergent epistemology.

So, I'm afraid there is not going to be much kumbaya between those who want to be formed by scriptural exegesis, and those who want to be formed by cultural exegesis, no matter how weary of conflict we are. Now if the emergent belief system only presented cultural differences, there would be little tension...but because it has biblical consequences, there is irreconcilable tension. Scripture veracity is a binary issue. One simply cannot sidestep the matter of whether or not the bible is God's trustworthy revelation to man. The scriptures demand a response, not a review. The one who believes the bible critiques him, cannot find harmony with the one who believes he critiques the bible.

The Emergent movement is essentially asking the age old question: "Did God really say...?" The more we gyrate and twist about in hopes of finding an intellectual posture towards scripture that liberals are happy with, or a spiritual posture towards scripture that other religions are happy with, the more we lose our way.

Blessings,

Mike

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/10/16 7:14

Quote:

-----Thanks for the article TJServant.

No problem, actually had you (and others) in mind when I posted it.

Quote:

-----It is wishful thinking to say that the emergent church can't be reduced to it's basic platform of higher criticism of scripture.

True, there really is no escaping this point. Oh, they try to disguise it, dress it up in fancy clothes and label it something new, but it simply remains the same to the discerning.

Quote:

-----The one who believes the bible critiques him, cannot find harmony with the one who believes he critiques the bible.

Amen.

I'm glad you caught this article Mike. Many folks today are so intent on masterminding some kind of all condoning group hug they themselves are tolerating compromise.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/10/16 7:20

Brother Mike wrote:

Quote:

-----The Emergent movement is essentially asking the age old question: "Did God really say...?" The more we gyrate and twist about in hopes of finding an intellectual posture towards scripture that liberals are happy with, or a spiritual posture towards scripture that other religions are happy with, the more we lose our way.

This and the rest of what you posted here brought much needed clarity to my thoughts this morning. My life as a believer has found it's life in the Light of Life. The Scriptures are the means by which my Lord keeps me planted by the still waters.

With our move to Pennsylvania and our involvement with the Brethren In Christ denomination, I have discovered a whole group of people who have grown up under the influences that you have identified in this thread. Last night, I wrote to the local bishop on this exact issue. I have only recently begun to "see" the fruits of liberal theology and how it dulls the ears of those who have drunk from this broken cistern. We are two different kinds of people...and I am finding that because of the source of water that we drink we can never find a common ground. I have been a struggle these last 3 years.

Thank you for your thoughts brother Mike.

Jeff

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/10/16 8:16

I believe if we as evangelicals would be much more of a prophetic people, then when it came to "story time," our stories would put to shame the warm and fuzzies feelings of those in the so-called emergent church. Perhaps it could best be said that the one way for us to be truly evangelical is to be prophetic.

Because the cold and rigid system of fundamentalism that has historically existed is just as spiritually dead as the emergent church. Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Bob Jones have death written all over them just as much as those in the emergent church. While doctrinally correct in their core beliefs, the life giving Spirit departed from their preaching long ago.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not calling into question any of the core evangelical/fundamentalist doctrines. They are no doubt the gospel truth. But many within our camp have confused gospel preaching with mere rehearsing of pre-chewed sermon outlines that tell "the plan of salvation" or "how to get saved." Yes, we need to preach those truths, but we are in need of a prophetic re-proclamation of those truths, so that Ezekiel's valley of dry bones might live.

Re: , on: 2009/10/16 8:31

"Because the cold and rigid system of fundamentalism that has historically existed is just as spiritually dead as the emergent church. Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Bob Jones have death written all over them just as much as those in the emergent church. While doctrinally correct in their core beliefs, the life giving Spirit departed from their preaching long ago." kingjim

Amen. You can have correct doctrine and still not have "HIM". I've become a little jaded by it all and risk my own detachment from 'Christlikeness' when I start seeing the depravity as something unstoppable and coming straight for me. It can be a lonely thing...

Re: - posted by bdcutler (), on: 2009/10/16 9:43

KingJimmy wrote:

Quote:
-----I believe if we as evangelicals would be much more of a prophetic people, then when it came to "story time," our stories would put to shame the warm and fuzzies feelings of those in the so-called emergent church.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Amen. There are many times I find myself holding fast to correct doctrine, while at the same time forgetting the Lord. We need both: to be immersed in the Word of God and His Spirit. It's not that we don't rejoice whenever the Gospel is preached, but to see it preached with the power of the Holy Spirit working through a man who has laid down his own life is amazing.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2009/10/16 14:00

Rookie said,

Quote:
-----We are two different kinds of people...and I am finding that because of the source of water that we drink we can never find a common ground. It has been a struggle these last 3 years.

I struggled with this myself, so I can hear the sigh in your conclusion here. I think we attempt this because of Jimmy's point.

Quote:
-----There are many times I find myself holding fast to correct doctrine, while at the same time forgetting the Lord.

Many of us are saddened by the suffocating formalism that has replaced true spiritual worship in even the most 'pentecostal' churches. Many times, we lapse into despair, feeling forced to choose between conservative hypocrisy or liberal heresy.

However, in spite of my empathy for your point, I think we should be more precise in how we articulate this problem. It is not fair to scripture to say that "I find myself holding fast to correct doctrine while...forgetting the Lord." This is impossible to do, because if we are indeed holding fast to correct doctrine, we will hold fast to the Lord, for such doctrine is emphasized repeatedly throughout scripture.

For instance, Jimmy quotes 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. According to correct doctrine, if you are only speaking with excellency and wisdom, without a determination to know Christ crucified...you are not holding to correct doctrine.

I think this is no small point. We need to stop belittling scripture, by saying confusing things like "the right doctrine will not save you". If you are obeying the right doctrine, you will come to Christ and indeed be saved! You"... will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The problem with the Evangelical church isn't that men believe all the right things, and still don't know Christ. Rather our churches have abandoned pure doctrine in favor of a polyester gospel for the sake of church growth. Some threads of their garments are right out of the bible....others are right out of a business management or self-help course.

I believe I can say with confidence, that if we were truly following sound doctrine, we would know Christ and him crucified (personally, spiritually, prophetically, mystically or however you want to express it), because this is the Christian life that sound doctrine describes! Paul had the same confidence in sound doctrine; "...we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal. 2:5)

Blessings,

Mike

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/10/16 14:11

Excellent points brother.

Quote:
-----I believe I can say with confidence, that if we were truly following sound doctrine, we would know Christ and him crucified (personally, spiritually, prophetically, mystically or however you want to express it), because this is the Christian life that sound doctrine describes! Paul had the same confidence in sound doctrine; "...we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal. 2:5)

Amen.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2009/10/16 14:44

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

I feel this haunting scripture from Revelation 2 captures the problem Jimmy was describing. What I find assuring in this scripture, is that the solution to the problem of loveless, spiritless formalistic discipline is not in some new deeper secret, or post-modern revisionism. It is to "repent, and do the first works."

While this is a very sobering warning, it is a very comforting one to me. Jesus is telling us we already know what to do according to what we've been taught. He is instructing us to go back to the beginning...to the fundamentals. (Now what's wrong with being called a fundamentalist?)

At this point I need to stop, before I sound like I have some kind of "answer" to what ails the church. I don't! (I'm having enough trouble learning how to be a good Christian father.) However, If I'm reading this right, whatever the answer is, it is not pressing into some new mysterious revelation known only to a few super-christians. Nor is it abandoning the historic Gospel in favor of a new spiritual synthesis. Nor is it in combining the two and calling it the "deep church". The answer, whatever it is, is found somewhere in repenting for having lost our first love, and in doing the first works again...like we did when we were faithfully instructed as babies in Christ!

I appreciate you guys! Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/10/16 15:02

Brother Mike,

You are a fountain today, a Scriptural picture that Jesus spoke of when He ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well. Isn't it wonderful how the word of God flows and the insight that it brings to our 'POSTMODERN TIMES.'

The word of the LORD stands forever....

and for those who grow faith to faith, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little there a little...will also realize this in their lives...

11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

Thank you brother Mike.

Jeff

Re: - posted by bdcutler (), on: 2009/10/21 19:29

Mike wrote,

Quote:

-----However, in spite of my empathy for your point, I think we should be more precise in how we articulate this problem.

Yes, Mike, you are right, of course. It is incorrect to say that I find myself holding fast to correct doctrine when in fact the truth is that I find myself holding fast to *what I think is correct doctrine*. Big difference. In fact, correct doctrine is putting my faith in the person of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, not all the details we sometimes get sidetracked with.

Thank you for your encouragements! God bless you!

Ben

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2009/10/21 21:17

Quote:

Compton wrote:

At this point I need to stop, before I sound like I have some kind of "answer" to what ails the church.

I tell you what's wrong, THE CHURCH IS DEAD.

On one side we have those who seek teaching of the Spirit without the Word. The Holy Spirit has for all ages embodied the thoughts of God in the written word, and lives now for this very purpose in our hearts, there to reveal the power and the meaning of that Word. If you would be full of the Spirit, be full of the Word, If you would have the Divine Life of the Spirit within you grow strong, and acquire power in every part of your nature; let the Word of Christ dwell richly in you.

On the other side we have another error, that the Word can unfold its Life in you without the Spirit within that accepts and appropriates it in the inner life. We need to remind ourselves and the Church unceasingly, that the Scriptures which were spoken by holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Spirit and can only be understood by holy men as they are taught by the same Spirit. The words I have spoken are Spirit and Life; for the apprehending and partaking of them the flesh profiteth nothing : it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the Spirit of Life within us.

The Jews were zealous for God's word and yet it turned out that all their zeal was for their human interpretation of God's word. Jesus said to them: 'Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me: and ye will not come to me that ye may have life.