

Articles and Sermons :: The Jesus Movement vs. The Emergent Church by Steve Gallagher

The Jesus Movement vs. The Emergent Church by Steve Gallagher - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2012/4/1 11:03

The other day I was contemplating some of the similarities of the Jesus Movement of the late Sixties and the more present day Emergent Church—perhaps in the same way a sports fan would compare a current baseball team with one from the past.

Both of these Christian movements had their respective leaders and proponents. Chuck Smith is considered the father of the Jesus Movement, although David Wilkerson, Leonard Ravenhill, Keith Green and others also played a large part in its development. The Emergent Church also has its proponents and organizers: men such as Donald Miller, Rob Bell, Tony Campolo, William Young and Brian McLaren.

Both movements have been enormously successful: spawning denominations, launching contemporary music styles and deeply affecting the corporate mindset of the Evangelical world of its day. The respective influence of the two groups of men mentioned above has been enormous. The Jesus Movement was even featured on the cover of Time magazine! However, the main resemblance between these movements is that both grew out of the youthful skepticism and disenchantment of their day. While the Jesus Movement reached out to the confused young people caught up in the drug subculture, sexual revolution and anti-war movement of the Sixties, Emergent leaders have attempted to connect with church kids that have become disillusioned with the hypocrisy and lifelessness they have sensed in much of today's Evangelical world.

Here is where the similarities end, however.

While the leaders of the Jesus Movement attempted to make Christianity relevant to the young people of their day, they never did it at the expense of its foundational truths. In fact, I don't know of any two ministers of the past century who preached the message of the Cross with such fearlessness and piercing conviction as did David Wilkerson and Leonard Ravenhill. Moreover, I can't think of any minister of the Twentieth Century who has exhibited such love as Chuck Smith and yet did it without deviating from sound doctrine.

By contrast, Rob Bell and his Post-Modern friends have made careers—wildly successful careers at that—out of challenging orthodoxy. They have correctly pointed out the lack of life and power in much of the modern church but, rather than calling Christians back to the ancient paths where true revival is always birthed, they have appealed to the disenchantment of today's young people by casting doubt on the very foundational truths of Scripture.

Take the hot topic of homosexuality, for instance. In straightforward fashion, Chuck Smith calls it “a perverted lifestyle.” Although he is the ever gracious “Papa Chuck” who exudes the love of Christ for sinners of any kind, the message he communicates to his audience is that Christianity demands, at the least, a sincere striving toward righteous living.

However, because Western culture has taken up gay rights as its cause, Emergent Church leaders—ever sensitive to the world's frown—cannot get themselves to denounce it. “If we think that there may actually be a legitimate context for some homosexual relationships,” says Brian McLaren, “we know that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered, and the pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex. We aren't sure if or where lines are to be drawn, nor do we know how to enforce with fairness whatever lines are drawn.”

Huh? Why do I feel like I'm listening to a politician when I read this kind of gobbledygook? It very much reminds me of my days working with inmates in the Los Angeles County Jail. There were times that I knew I was being conned—even if I couldn't necessarily pinpoint any particular lie. I get that exact feeling when reading many of the writings of these Post-Modern preachers.

The common denominator among false teachers of all ages is the desire for acceptance from the world. “Woe to you when all men speak well of you,” Jesus exclaimed; “for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.” (Luke 6:26)

Outright falsehoods are bad enough, but even worse (and more dangerous) are teachings that subtly nudge people toward errant belief systems. The sense I get with these teachers is that they don't have the courage to face the criticism of godly believers so they camouflage what they really believe behind a lot of doubletalk.

How far different was the sense one got when listening to men like Chuck Smith, David Wilkerson and Leonard Ravenhill

I. I have read their books and have listened to hundreds of hours of their preaching and I can honestly say that I have never had the feeling that they were being anything other than completely forthright in their beliefs.

I recently gave a message entitled, "The Three Great Woes of Hell." I opened it by mentioning Rob Bell's book "Love Wins," in which he brings into question the clear cut statements of Christ regarding hell. I said something to this effect:

"It is interesting that no one argues the existence of heaven. It is only the existence of hell which is questioned..."

My guess is that this man has a long history of deceiving himself.

My guess is that he has never been to Calvary with his own sins; never really faced the blackness of his own heart; never really humbled himself before God.

My guess is that it is his own hardened, unbroken heart that has established the basis of all of his teachings.

My guess is that he has a long history in the ministry of telling people what they want to hear.

My guess is that he has never taught people the whole truth; that his notion that there is no hell is just one more in a long line of deceptions."

So, what is the real difference between the Jesus Movement and the Emergent Church? From my perspective it is Calvary. The message I heard when I came to the Lord through the Jesus Movement in 1970 was that I was a sinner who must repent of his sins. The message I seem to hear from the Emergent Church is that everything I've been taught through Scripture over the years is questionable and must be viewed in light of today's culture.

I think I can understand why Rob Bell claims that truth is "springy." Because the truth he adheres to in life is wishy-washy and based in the fluctuating opinions and viewpoints of the current (but passing) culture he wishes to appease. What he doesn't seem to grasp is that biblical truth is as solid as the Rock on which it stands. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations..." (Psalm 119:89-90)

from: <http://www.eternalweight.com/jesus-movement>

Re: The Jesus Movement vs. The Emergent Church by Steve Gallagher - posted by learjet, on: 2012/4/1 12:04

Thanks for posting this article Greg, it's a great example of the contrasts between the two movements. Since they are being compared to one another it's great that someone took the time to note the differences.

The Jesus Movement - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/4/1 15:41

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