



General Topics :: "COOL" CHRISTIANITY - Entertained to Death?? by Andrew Strom

"COOL" CHRISTIANITY - Entertained to Death?? by Andrew Strom - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2013/2/12 7:15

Got this in my email box this morning...consider it timely...ginnyrose

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"COOL" CHRISTIANITY - Entertained to Death??

by Andrew Strom

In 1993, the well-known evangelical preacher John MacArthur put out a book entitled 'Ashamed of the Gospel' (subtitled, "When the church becomes like the world"). Obviously, because it was written by a known Conservative, many modern leaders may have found it easy to bypass this book's insights and warnings. But when I read it, I found it an incisive and devastating expose of much that is now occurring in Christendom. In it, MacArthur writes: "Traditional methodology - most noticeably preaching - is being discarded or downplayed in favor of newer means, such as drama, dance, comedy, variety, side-show histrionics, pop-psychology, and other entertainment forms... In the past half-decade, some of America's largest evangelical churches have employed worldly gimmicks like slapstick, vaudeville, wrestling exhibitions and even mock striptease to spice up their Sunday meetings. No brand of horseplay, it seems, is too outrageous to be brought into the sanctuary. Burlesque is fast becoming the liturgy of the pragmatic church."

In many churches today, it is seemingly no longer 'positive' enough (in the modern TV-marketing sense of the word) to emphasise the cross, deep repentance, holiness, "death to self" and all the other meaty elements of basic Christianity which the New Testament emphasises again and again. And so we change everything (even the very essence of the gospel itself) to fit the spirit of the age in which we live.

"People don't want to hear about all that negative 'sin' stuff any more," we reason. "We'd better preach things that win them over in a positive, modern way." Thus, the epidemic of preachers who seem to sound more and more like TV commercials every week: "Come to Jesus, He will make you happy, He will fulfill the desires of your heart, He will comfort you, He will satisfy you, etc, etc."

There is almost no difference here to the sentiments expressed in your average toothpaste commercial, but the most alarming thing of all is that many preachers seemingly wouldn't care even if there was. They cannot see what an enormous effect this 'marketing' approach is having on the very nature and content of the gospel they preach, and thus on the lives of the Christians all around them. Their attitude often seems to be:- 'Whatever brings them in the door is OK by me.' This is the very attitude that has led to what I believe is a crisis of colossal proportions amongst today's Christian youth.

As I have said, today much of this error is flooding into the church under the guise of "relevance". In the name of 'relevance' we are rushing around desperately trying to make our music "cool" and our leadership style "cool" and our gospel "cool" and our youth events "cool", etc, etc,- all in an effort to attract the world on its own terms. None of this is of God at all. It relies almost entirely on the 'arm of the flesh'. It is really nothing less than worldliness and compromise in a new and very subtle (yet deadly) form.

Instead of "holier than thou", it seems like we are now expected to be "cooler than thou". Our whole effort is aimed at proving to the world that Christianity is just as cool, just as much shallow fun, just as much of a party, as the world has to offer. And so, to prove all this, we have to entertain and entertain and entertain. We feel we have to become just like the world, in order to impress the world on its own terms. Thus, we now need to be seen in fashionable (or better- still, 'hip' or alternative) clothes. And our

youth events become an excuse for a "party". And our presentations become entertaining multi-media extravaganzas.

All in an effort to equal or "out-cool" the world. (Which is why you now see 'moshing' heads, slam-dancing and stage-diving at our youth concerts - matching the world on its own mindless, hedonistic terms. "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"). Like I said, cool pride, worldliness and rebellion - all in the name of "relevance". JUST LIKE the WORLD in EVERY SENSE. Does this sound like God to you?

Speaking of the huge Christian Greenbelt Festival held regularly in England, musician John Allen stated: "It seems undeniable that most of the audience is there simply to enjoy the music, not to think hard about anything; and there is a real danger of the emergence of the 'Greenbelt Christian', the semi-converted, shallowly committed teenager whose Christianity means little more than that he enjoys festival-going." What a tremendously significant statement! And the tragic fact is, that such 'Greenbelt Christians' are now found in their multiplied thousands right around the globe. For it is not just the large festivals that have succumbed to this spirit of entertainment. We now find this 'entertain-them-at-all-costs' approach everywhere, from local church youth groups right up to large regional gatherings. This spirit has pervaded everything, particularly those areas in the church that are connected with young people. In fact, it has become increasingly rare to find gatherings of Christian youth now in which these attitudes do not prevail.

What we are actually doing by trying to make our Christianity more worldly, is placing it at a great disadvantage. We are stripping it of the things that historically have made the Christian faith so appealing and powerful. I am also convinced that more than anything else, today's jaded youth will respond to a CHALLENGE. In fact, I am convinced that the greater the challenge, the more interest and the greater level of discipleship there will be. What today's "amused-to-death" young people need desperately is a cause worth fighting and dying for - a cause that calls them to deny themselves and to live a life of radical obedience to God. Jesus Christ is that cause. And if we don't provide such a challenge to today's jaded generation, then don't be surprised if some much darker cause arises to steal their allegiance. In many ways, today's youth, raised for much of their lives in a spiritual and moral vacuum, are truly ripe for the picking. And the devil knows this very well. If we are not willing to provide the youth with a cause worth dying for, then he surely will.

There has always been a 'social' aspect to the Western church that has attracted a certain 'club' membership. But this is different. This is an epidemic, and it is being encouraged right from the very top down. Many pastors and youth leaders have concluded that it is best to give the young people what they seem to want, just so they can get the numbers in the door. And the problem is growing worse, not better. Unless something drastic is done, all I can personally see on the horizon is years and years of such continual shallowness that we end up with churches full of people who desire little else but 'ear-tickling', entertainment and crowd-pleasing (rather than God-pleasing) "worship". In actual fact, this is already a total reality on such a massive scale in today's Western church, that it begs the question of whether true, historic Christianity can even survive much longer without being utterly swamped by the prevailing hedonism and selfishness. Despite what we are being told, things really are that serious. True, historic Christianity is in terrible danger on many fronts. Unless something dramatic occurs, I see only years of increasing lukewarmness, shallowness and compromise ahead.

Surely the lament of Jesus found in Mt 15:8 is just as applicable today as it was then: "This people draw nigh to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Where are those amongst today's youth ministers who will stand up and be counted for the Lord and His truth in our day?

**Re: "COOL" CHRISTIANITY - Entertained to Death?? by Andrew Strom - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2013/2/12 7:26**

As I read this article, I was struck by the possibility of young people standing up and saying, "ENOUGH! We are sick and tired of this foolishness...." Where are you, young people? Will you answer the call to repentance, to sacrifice, to obedience, to holy living? Will you reclaim the devastation that has wrecked society?

Young people, the call to holiness is in direct contrast to what it marketed, considered the norm in the world today. You may have to surrender your favorite gadgets lest you be distracted from your call to purity and holiness. The LORD is calling you, go forth and be the light the world so desperately needs. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you, to empower you and be the light, demonstrate to the world that God is not dead and that He is the heart changing business still.... And you know what? It will encourage us seniors to see the young take up the battle for the LORD.

God bless...

ginnyrose

Re: "COOL" CHRISTIANITY - Entertained to Death?? by Andrew Strom, on: 2013/2/12 8:43

Quote:  
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The problem sister is that even in 1986 to my own witness, in the AOG there were at least some young brethren who did stand against this nonsense. The pastors and some elders not only rejected what was being said to them plainly and without equivocation, but they went on to empower the young people of that day with notions of ministry which are not ministries at all and these same young people are now the middle aged brethren who will not let this rubbish go. In less than three decades I have seen traditional pentecostal churches go from gospel preaching beacons, into babylonian madness. These now middle aged brethren cannot even bear to hear a word of warning, always asserting that such warnings are of the devil. I am very serious about this. I wrote to pastors and spoke with numbers of elders in the year of 1986 when I first saw this slide into confusion and was openly rebuked and cut off for my efforts. Elders shared with me (men double my age), that they felt as though their positions had been taken from them as young people embraced the "ministry" through such mediums as dance, drama, and a host of other insane presentations of Christ. There was no comprehension that the gospel cannot be communicated in this way and that attempting to do so would inevitably give an opening for the wicked one to impute his poison into the presentation. I even went as far as to explain why particular drama presentations were unsound and how in them were notional concepts which even denied the very sovereignty and authority of Christ. No one listened and no one wanted to listen. I even remember the very day when the change took place in my own fellowship from an elder and pastor led ministry, to a youth led ministry. I reached over to one brother who was an elder and asked him, "brother do you not comprehend that your very authority is being taken away". He said he did understand it but that he could do nothing about it because he was just one among a number who had agreed to the change.

The latest phase of this slide into apostasy I witnessed just two years ago. A truly lovely and gentle pastor of some thirty years standing made the appalling mistake of appointing sisters to positions of eldership. Within less than one year these two sisters marched into his office ordered him to go home and to remain in isolation from the flock because he was under investigation. He did what was asked of him. Within 10 days he had been spiritually murdered, put out of his job, slandered and publicly humiliated and tossed aside without so much as a last pay cheque. When I heard of this I cannot describe the righteous anger which came upon me. I went to his house and learned first hand what the substance of this situation was both the accusation, which was in any event false, and I learned how circumstances in his life brought about by fear and the working of Satan whilst he was at bible college some thirty two years earlier had laid a foundation for these accusations to take on a seeming substance. There were five elders in this church and yet two sisters managed to destroy the lead pastor simply because he resisted their efforts to introduce a false gospel. If they had not been sisters I would have gone up against them without any doubting that they would have borne the consequences of their actions in their own bodies. Within days of this wickedness the church literally received a fresh coat of paint and the church's web site was changed so that not one single reference to Christ could be seen prominently, lest it offend. Today it simply says "Building communities Changing Lives...Something for Everyone".

Sister there are no youth who will rise up and change that which has been in the making for seventy years or more. The end is upon us and unless we separate ourselves unto the Lord we will be hurt by what is to come. This is not to deny that there is going to be an awakening and a revival of many saints in many places, but in the end this will be unto a great harvest for the Lord's name and not to give credibility to an apostate church. Then there will be no excuse whatsoever, for all brethren will by sight know the wonder of Christ in the midst. What follows thereafter will be blackest darkness.

**Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2013/2/12 9:40**

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-----amrkelly...Sister there are no youth who will rise up and change that which has been in the making for seventy years or more. The end is upon us and unless we separate ourselves unto the Lord we will be hurt by what is to come. This is not to deny that there is going to be an awakening and a revival of many saints in many places, but in the end this will be unto a great harvest for the Lord' name and not to give credibility to an apostate church. Then there will be no excuse whatsoever, for all brethren will by sight know the wonder of Christ in the midst. What follows thereafter will be blackest darkness.  
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Amen! Amen! and Amen! on that statement.

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2013/2/12 10:49**

Andrew, I understand your evaluation of what has happened in your own church. I can bear witness to something similar in my own denomination which is Mennonite.

Back in the 50's there was a revival in our community. People turned to the WORD - there was a renewed interest in it, young people started reading the WORD, youth gatherings were marked by Bible Study. Bible Schools were formed and well attended. Young people went to the mission field. But, alas! Before too long legalism raised its head because people did not give place to the Holy Spirit as they should have. They hoped to maintain the fervor for God through legislation, but it only gave way to administration. Today, there are many in leadership who are more into administration than in discipling. Counseling has replaced shepherding. People have no clue what the voice of the Spirit sounds like. Their conscience has been seared. It is all about me, my comforts, my conveniences and how God exists to enhance it. Sacrifice, submission, obedience are concepts too old-fashioned for moderns - or so they think. Where divorce/remarriage used to be rare, is now becoming accepted and no longer frowned upon. They believe they are liberated from the chains that bound their predecessors!

I, too, grieve for the body of people from which I came. But surely, there are some out there who are hearing the call, are they not? If you are, stand up and let yourself be heard! But do not expect ANY help from the conventional church. It will work to silence you into apostasy.

God bless you, Andrew. I appreciate hearing the concern from those across the pond, knowing the Holy Spirit is at work in other parts of the globe...this encourages me.

ginnyrose

**Re: , on: 2013/2/12 12:42**

Hi Amrkelly,

I also say amen to what you wrote. Things are equally as dire in Scotland and it has been many many years that I have mourned the slow death of pentecostalism in Scotland. The "acquire the fire," generation are well and truly entrenched and surely it will be a soulless generation that will full-heartedly embrace the coming great whore church.....bro Frank