

**General Topics :: 3 new church movements seemingly at odds****3 new church movements seemingly at odds - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/27 19:39**

In light of Sermonindex' overarching theme of revival, I wanted to present a question that has been forming in my mind regarding the future of the church.

Currently I am noticing 3 different and apparently conflicting trends for the future of the church. All 3 directions claim to be the fastest growing and most radical adjustment in Christianity since the Reformation itself. What is curious is that they all want the same objective: authentic New Testament apostolic Christianity

Let me briefly describe these three models as I understand them. My intent is respectful since I am presuming to describe my brothers and sisters.

1) The Apostolic Reformation: The loose formation of apostolic networks all over the world in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the United States, which desire to be God's "new wineskins" for what used to be denominations. At the core of this idea is that God is restoring the office of Apostle in every literal sense minus the penning of new scripture. Along with prophets, these leaders become the foundation of the church. "Vertical" apostles are over several churches and "horizontal" apostles position themselves as guides to other apostles. It should be noted that all of this sounds much more authoritative than it could be---these structures currently just function as friendly peer groups.

The pastor, rather than being an employee of the church, leads almost unilaterally with majority discretion of the budget. Megachurches are regarded as the flagship vessels, where most of the senior apostolic talent will be raised up. Money and modernity are talked about openly and directly as pragmatic solutions for advancing God's kingdom.

The chief virtue of the Apostolic Reformation is that the church, through nimble Godly leadership, can mobilize people and resources faster, without bureaucracy to fulfill its prophetic mandate.

For more info read C.Peter Wagner's "Churchquake", regarded as an essential guidebook for the movement.

2) The Emergent Church: If the Apostolic Church represents "consensus", then this international movement represents "contested consensus". Here the modern mega-church, as well as traditional authorities are being rejected in favor of the post-modern faith community. Whereas the 20th century church had to engage a society certain of its scientific knowledge, the 21st century church will have to engage a society certain of nothing. Newtonian laws give way to quantum chaos. In order to provide a counter culture to the angst of uncertainty, the emergent church reaches back in church history and employs icons, creeds, and liturgies freely with contemporary worship and preaching. Of the many churches that are identifying themselves with this movement, the one thing they have in common is uniqueness from each other. Each community invites its members to creatively contribute to the mission formation.

In claiming that the post-modern world shares several similarities to the ancient pagan world, this movement assigns itself the goal of restoring historic christianity---not reinventing it. They are not the irreligious liberal church. Though they seem to attract Christians beyond the "right-wing"spectrum, they espouse discipleship to the living Jesus.

It is noteworthy that why they maintain the sole authority of scripture they do not maintain that objective certainty is always possible concerning its interpretation. They point out that the church predates scripture so each community is only bound to historic orthodoxy, not the strict minutia of modern denominations. To them, this is being an authentic and living "Christocentric" church, vs. a modern static "bibliocentric" church.

The chief virtue of the Emergent Church is that each member feels ownership for the ministry of the community, allowing for vital nuances of communication needed to reach the shapeless global society of the new century.

For more info check out "Emerging Church" by Dan Kimball, or "Ancient Faith, Future Faith" by Robert E. Webber.

3) The Churchless Church: This is a trend that I just recently became aware of. Also called the "Out of Church Christians" this group is an unorganized (at least by man) phenomena that is gaining global attention. I would describe these believers as "disenchantment seeking re-enchancement" or better yet, "Reorganizing Church outside Organized

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Religion." They are the former laypeople, lay leaders, and staff leaders of organized churches.

The fact that this trend represents a diverse and autonomous exodus across racial, economic, denominational, and cognitive borders, yet still has a unifying principle is noteworthy; these believers are bleeding out of organized religion because they feel established leadership is failing to obey the commands of Jesus for His church.

Claiming financial and spiritual fiduciary failure by existing leadership, these brothers and sisters have determined to reorganize themselves afresh in each other's homes or businesses. They want a renewed passion for frontline ministries such as feeding the poor, sheltering the homeless, and evangelizing the lost without pointless spending. They want to be free to express the gospel without being co-opted into political party advertising. They want to find healing and recovery from hurtful authority experiences. They want to leave the entrenched command structure of the fortress and engage the enemy as aggressive cavalry and infantry.

The chief virtue for the "Churchless Church" is that they can commit their spiritual and material resources to the Great Commission in a manner they believe in, free from undesirable wastefulness.

I know that several people have recently posted on this subject who certainly know more than myself.

Here is a link on the subject:

(<http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~revival/00-Out-Of-Church.html>) Out of Church Christians

If you are still reading this, I am interested if someone can suggest a meaningful theme to what seems to be divergent trends. I like to make order of things...it's a compulsion I guess. If you have an insight, concern, or critique I would find it interesting.

Please do not post stories of abuse and disillusionment by any of these movements. Please do not use my sincere inquiry as a dartboard to throw around scriptures like 2 Peter 2, or Matthew 7:15-23. Besides missing the point of my question, I'll feel the sting of the darts since I stand in solidarity with the body. Cutting off branches is not the work given to me. :-o

Thanks!

MC

**Re: 3 new church movements seemingly at odds - posted by geddingsm (), on: 2005/2/27 20:56**

Just my humble opinion but I feel that all these movements are the result of people in traditional church tired of a powerless bride that has become a shell of her former self.

I know exactly how they feel. The two I am most familiar with is the Apostolic and the Out of church. I feel that people may be in search of "back to the basics" theology with hope of restoring the Church to Her former glory. The ones that are not in the apostolic movement may be afraid that it may be too charismatic. The out of church may not want any of the traditional structure of church.

Like I said before this is my humble opinion but I can certainly identify with those that feel something needs to give in the way traditional church is done in the US. I do feel that God could certainly use any of these movements to bring revival.

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**Re: - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2005/2/27 22:19**

I think you might be missing one known as CGM or Church Growth Movements which seek to impliment Marketing practices in their programs to help growth (i.e. Purpose Driven/Willow Creek/G12). They are closely related to the emerging church movements but not completely the same.

However, the movement I want to be apart of is a despised section of the Church known as the Remnant.

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/27 22:49**

Quote:

-----...I feel that all these movements are the result of people in traditional church tired of a powerless bride...  
-----

It's so obvious I missed it but I think you are right. These movements are catching the fall-out from traditional churches. Taken together numerically they represent an obvious problem for mainline churches. I know of at least one Emergent church that is affiliated with a mainline denomination, the ELCA.

I realize that any church could be a blend from these categories. Also, the Emergent and the Apostolic reformation both claim Rick Warren's Saddleback church...which seems like a stretch in both cases

For those who might be unfamiliar with the Emergent Church, here are a few examples:

(<http://www.apostleschurch.org/home.php>) Church of the Apostles

(<http://solomonsporch.com/index.html>) Solomon's Porch

(<http://vintagechurch.org/>) Vintage Faith

For those who are curious about the Apostolic Reformation here are some examples.

(<http://www.victoryint.org/>) Victory International

(<http://www.antiochchurches.org/network.htm>) Antioch Church Network

(<http://www.asianoutreach.org/index2.htm>) Asian Outreach

MC

**Re: CGM - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/27 22:57**

Jeremy,

You are right. I guess the Willow Creek Church is like a "proto-emergent church." :-D Listen to me. Now I sound like I'm some kind of doctor of "Churchiology". :-P

Quote:

----- However, the movement I want to be apart of is a despised section of the Church known as the Remnant.  
-----

May we both be so blessed!

MC

**Re: 3 new church movements seemingly at odds, on: 2005/2/27 23:49**

As far as the New Apostolic Reformation church goes, they are as far removed from scriptural reality than anyone could ever imagine. Just more of the same kinds of Type A silverback pastors and prophets who want nothing more than to line their pockets with the profits of their latest book deal or Prophecy conference so they can continue to go to Panera Bread for lunch every day. They also seem preoccupied with teaching "Satan's deeper secrets" than preaching the Gospel.

I don't know much about that emergent church so I will refrain.

I do, however, think that the "Out of Church Christians" will be the trend of the future. The Lord is currently waving his winnowing fork and will soon begin to beat the threshing floor to separate the wheat from the chaff. This will mean that many will leave current denominational churches and non-denoms but they will do so mainly because the greatest persecution that has ever been will be underweight. I myself have grown extremely bored, unchallenged, and unwilling to attend my current church.

This is the way I see it anyway.

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/28 0:27**

Quote:  
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silverback pastors and prophets who want nothing more than to line their pockets with the profits of their latest book deal or Prophecy conference so they can continue to go to Panera Bread for lunch every day. They also seem preoccupied with teaching "Satan's deeper secrets"  
-----

Don't sugar coat it Picky. Tell us what you really think! :-?

Actually I have to admit that the Churchless Church idea has been kind of growing on me. I like the idea of my money actually reaching the needy and lost. Furthermore, the fellowship I have with my fellow Christians is really what I live on each week...I can see about 12-20 of us meeting in my studio...

hmmm.... :-(

**Re:, on: 2005/2/28 0:59**

Hmmm, I like that Compton! When do we meet and where? I'll brew some coffee.

OUTSTANDING BROTHER!!!!

**Re: Symmetry - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/28 1:49**

Just thinking out loud but there may be a symmetry to the history of the church...

- 1) From early small house fellowships with a few larger communities...
- 2) ...to the Constantinian of the church into an unequally yoked state relationship...
- 3) ...becoming an earthly magisterial government ruling the state...
- 4)... breaking up into segments of the invisible church...
- 5) ...further breaking down into countless denominations...
- 6) Until finally atomizing back into small house fellowships with a few larger communities.

Ironically, this faith without walls could actually be more united in purpose than it has been for 1000 years. Another benefit would be that American Christians would not have to choose between churches sold out to Republican or Democratic party politics.

Consider how this trend reflects the liquidity required in globalization---a global community kept connected by websites like Sermonindex.

A truly Catholic movement, from Fordism to post-fordism, centralized money trapping to decentralized money flow, geographical division to cyberspace connection with millions of networked communities.

Groovy 8-)

MC

**Re:, on: 2005/2/28 1:56**

Ratt-a-tatta-tat tat groovy Jazz Cat. I'm envisioning sit-ins with flowers, tea, and nylon string acoustic guitar singalongs.

Nah, just kidding. I like the analysis though!

**Re: - posted by AgesofWar (), on: 2005/2/28 2:21**

If there was a church in our homes how would we reach the lost, would they just come by the house?

Would we advertise? "Hey come on down to my place and I'll sermon you up a cup O coffee.

I like the Idea of a Tight Group of Peeps only looking out for the Things of God.

But I think the Day of House Churches is gone for the Next 5 years.

But ask me again in about 5 years and we may have to meet in the homes like they do in China.

PS. Can I pastor in someone else's house or is it that whoever holds the meeting sermons his guests?  
:-P

**Re: 3 new church movements seemingly at odds - posted by smichael, on: 2005/2/28 2:26**

Why does any particular structure need to be "the church." The people are the church. Look at the natural body. It is composed of many different systems, respiratory, nervous, circulatory, and others. Each has a particular structure. But, it all works together for the good, (homeostasis) of the body. The body does the work the head tells it to. People are the church, not a hierarchical structure. For the church that is responsible for feeding the poor and other outreach small groups works great. For the church that is involved in government many times size and strength is required. Same cross, same blood, same job, occupy until I (He) comes.

**Re: 3 church models - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/28 5:14**

Quote:

-----  
Why does any particular structure need to be "the church." .  
-----

Good question.

From AgesofWar...

Quote:

-----If there was a church in our homes how would we reach the lost, would they just come by the house?  
-----

Regarding outreach, I think house churches could have an advantage over congregational settings in many cases. You would have to invite people of course, but I have liberal acquaintances who would not normally attend church that have been willing to discuss the gospel while in my studio. Sometimes for 4 or 5 hours at a time... There is more security I guess.

Quote:

-----Can I pastor in someone else's house or is it that whoever holds the meeting sermons his guests?  
-----

Sure you could pastor in someone else's house! That is of course until the year 2023 when the future church develops robotic pastorbots that can download Wi-Fi sermons... ;-)

In the course of looking at the 3 different church models that seem to be popping up, I became more acquainted with the Churchless Church concept. I have quickly come to see its validity but in the end I don't think it would be right for my family.

Maybe if I was 15 years younger or single!

I recently came from a church that belonged to an Apostolic Network...in my case things didn't work out. Ironically I am now at a healthy Nazarene fellowship. Many denominational churches are still healthy.

I am still curious for other comments regarding the new church trends that are emerging. Is disenchantment with mainline churches the only commonality between all of them?

MC

**Re: 3 new church movements seemingly at odds - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/2/28 6:02**

MC

I think you are identifying some key issues here. I am not usually associated with status quo thinking. Indeed, in my youth I had something of a reputation for being an evangelical Che Guevara! In heart I remain a radical, or as I sometimes say a 'congenital nonconformist'. When folk say you must, my question is always 'why?' But I temper my radicalism with the scriptural injunction; Test all things, hold fast the good. (1Th 5:21 LITV)

I think there are many causes for disenchantment. We might argue that it is always good for us to be 'dissed' of any 'enchantment'. ;-) Or if we switch to disillusionment, I am all in favour of being 'dissed' of all 'illusions'. I have no doubt that much unrest is caused as people discover that things are not as they thought they were. The gap between expectation and realisation is called disappointment.

One of our brothers on the site here has a sign-off to the intent that 'evangelism is a great cure for church boredom'. I think I know his heart and this is not a criticism, but it breaks my heart everytime I read it. How can the gathering of the saints in the present power of the Holy Spirit ever be boring? Can you imagine being bored in the church at Corinth? I can think of a few other descriptions but 'boredom'? I don't think so.

The emblems of the Spirit most used in scriptures are flowing water, driving wind and consuming fire. What shape is flowing water, driving wind or consuming fire? What will you contain them in?

In the UK the charismatic movement emerged from unrest and disaffection. There was an adolescent element to the movement. A leading UK charismatic has said it arose out of 'rebellion'. Is this the 'grumpy old man' looking back on his teenage years? I don't think so, not completely. There was an impatience to get on with things. It was tempered by charismatics from the historic denominations who were determined to keep the fire/wind/streams in their older structures.

Is the modern 'out of church' movement another turn of the wheel in the same cycle? I have some historical contacts with the UK spokesmen for 'post evangelicalism' and the 'emerging model'. It reminds me of Mao's constant revolution. It is true that generally they have not rejected inerrancy, but some have rejected the scriptures traditional place in their pra

ctices in their endeavour not to be 'bible bound'. The great tragedy of the charismatic movement was that it began without a root system, and new groupings and leaders emerged who had no organic link with an older spirituality.

We see part of the phenomena here on SI. A W Tozer and his like had never been part of the heritage of the charismatics and their heirs. We now have a phenomena where the writing and preaching of men which has been ignored for 50 years is finding an audience. People are discovering Tozer and Ravenhill and Murray and Amy Carmichael and a whole emphasis on the inward work of God's Spirit that was ignored by the charismatics. If the charismatics had remained in their historic links would they have lost some treasures, and would the enjoying of these treasures have prevented the nonsense of much contemporary charismania?

There is a missing generation in between Tozer and most of his Tozerphiles. It is the generation that broke loose from the restraints. They did not receive Tozer from their spiritual parents but from the archives. I am just using Tozer as an example. Is the disturbance in the Church being caused by God or Church's ancient enemy who knows only too well the strategy of divide and conquer.

We have some here who are exploring a different strategy. Endeavouring, for love's sake to maintain the unity of the Spirit, while refusing to allow the ancient structures to squeeze the life out of them. Our contemporary situation probably has similarities to the church of the First Century. Some synagogues became completely Christian, some rejected the truth entirely. Some were in flux. It has always been the purpose of God to set the solitary in families, we should expect such and opt for the solitary route only in the most extreme circumstances.

There's an interesting story told about Simon Stylites who withdrew from the structures of his day, both world and church, and took up his solitary vigil on the top of a pole. He became famous for his 'holiness' and crows came to see him in his 'lonely isolation'. A Christian of the same era having heard of Simon's exploits had a simple but profound question; "but whose feet does he wash?"

**Re: - posted by MarkDaniel (), on: 2005/2/28 8:34**

The only movement I'm interested in is the movement of the Holy Spirit on man, both in and out of any church movement organized by men...bringing them back to the cross of Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Re: Your people! - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/2/28 9:47**

Oh... how I brood over this church, this cyber-structure, this gathering of souls here. In speaking with Greg yesterday (Our beloved Webmaster) he mentioned "keep praying about SI". My response was something to the effect of "Brother this is like an appendage grown out of my head (heart), it is always a constant prayer". So much that goes on and comes through here... it has become almost wordless in expression other than "Your people!" Can often times only groan, a full rendering of Romans 8:26.

Why the preamble? Good question, perhaps it's in what followed out from Ron's comments here which seem to summarize so much. Much thanks to you MC for your input and to all responding.

Think in answer to your (MC) original question, at least in part,

Quote:

-----I am interested if someone can suggest a meaningful theme to what seems to be divergent trends.  
-----

Would borrow one from Ron;

"Flux"

Redundant is the nature of this particular misfit so... I don't know 'what' it is exactly, but something is and has been going on around here as long as I have been blessed to have fallen off the cliff of Christendom into this vast goldmine and Ron has so eloquently expressed much of that;

Quote:

-----I am all in favour of being 'dissed' of all 'illusions'. I have no doubt that much unrest is caused as people discover that things are not at they thought they were. The gap between expectation and realization is called disappointment.  
-----

So in a large way think there is much by way of that amongst us, a gathering of the 'congenital nonconformist' or "rebels

with a conscience". The revolt is only against all that is false, superficial, shallow, manipulative, man-made, program designed pragmatism.... More redundancy; In a sense it's "We may not know *what* it is, but it's not *that*". It seems to be both a wonder and an indigestion. On the positive side, the question being asked and the striving after is 'What exactly is the Church?'. Certainly we all know what it ought to be and in the deepest sense spiritually, it is what causes such strong, at times gut wrenching grieving, other times overwhelming joy in that ideal of our Lords words;

Joh 17:23 I am in them, and you are in me. May they be completely one, so that the world may know that you sent me and that you have loved them as you loved me.

And for the most part have found that to be true here and so as it stands in this point in time, this place is church to me.

But it is also not a lot of things of course.

Looking at this broadly it seems that especially with the rise of the Internet and the ability to communicate globally (seen the thread on the countries checking in here?....Goosebump city!) what is most interesting is that now the 'church goers' have a voice and what may have been suppressed is starting to come out and it's a mixed bag for sure.

There is what we prefer and then what is needed. If anything I praise God that there is a heart that longs after Himself no matter where or in what 'structure' that gets expressed through. Ultimately it would probably go without saying, but I will do it anyways: A lot of us just want to be where God is, where His manifest Presence is *felt*, be it in a tabernacle, a house, or a building.

I don't know if I am really saying anything here at all as far as what to do about the situation...Actually that's not entirely true. I can and do pray about it, something that raises again that misplaced idea that 'when all else fails....pray', when in reality all else fails if we neglect to pray.

Am definitely smack dab in the middle of this flux and the words of our brother Robert elsewhere reverberate in my head that "*My worry isn't so much about those 'out of church' ones that are gathering in homes, but those with 'no-church'*" So something to that effect, have taken it to heart as well as the whole idea of being 'back' in a unpleasant setting preference wise, perhaps the Lord would have us stay in these places with the intent to 'reform' them... Just looking at the letters to the churches in Revelations is telling. By means of reform, only meant by means of His working through us, in fact it is an utter impossibility otherwise, we would just be caught up in the vicious cycle of that infamous statement "*amazed at how much the church in America can accomplish without the Holy Spirit*" and that applies beyond these shores.

All this is beginning to sound like what is needed is a Revival. And maybe, just maybe that missing 'something' is already in our midst, is this what we are seeing? The stirrings of a revival, certainly seems that the Lord is calling many out of the 'institutional' **mindset**... Maybe I am just waxing eloquently. I just don't know.

Back to Ron's wonderful comments:

Quote:  
-----One of our brothers on the site here has a sign-off to the intent that 'evangelism is a great cure for church boredom'. I think I know his heart and this is not a criticism, but it breaks my heart everytime I read it. How can the gathering of the saints in the present power of the Holy Spirit ever be boring? Can you imagine being bored in the church at Corinth? I can think of a few other descriptions but 'boredom'? I don't think so.  
-----

Echoed.  
How much this relates...It just resonates in a similar way;

*Lying looking over the magnificent moonlit pathway across the sea, my mind settled in to gratitude to God that I am going out under no denominational call at all, but with free scope to follow Him undeterred. This may sound loose, but it does not mean looseness, but rather the most delightful and strenuous concentration on Him.*

*They are beginning to call the life on board dull. My word! dull! with books and sea and mind and prayer, dull! It is teeming with endless and joyous interest. The vast expanse of sea is just great.*

*October 24: I do thank God for this voyage. It has been most delightful, and this lifeboat has been a real Bethel to me. It*



*has come to be known now as my lifeboat. It has been a wonderful rest and tonic in every way, and now I go to behold His wonderful undertakings in landing, and in Egypt, and in the camps. It is a great charm not to know, but just to see Him unfold His purposes.*

Oswald Chambers

Abandoned to God.

It is with all the restraint I can muster not to cut and paste this whole reply here from Ron into segments and more commentary. To the whole of it, *AMEN!*

So much for resistance:

Quote:  
-----We have some here who are exploring a different strategy. Endeavouring, for love's sake to maintain the unity of the Spirit, while refusing to allow the ancient structures to squeeze the life out of them.  
-----

Should have put this nearer to the top here.

Quote:  
-----Is the disturbance in the Church being caused by God or Church's ancient enemy who knows only too well the strategy of divide and conquer.  
-----

Both?

Always attempting to thwart the Lords purposes.

It would indeed seem a bit odd that this phenomenon of a building number of 'out of church' ones was all because of a 'mob rules' mindset, that was all stemming out of resentment. I was actually quite taken back after feeling led to remove myself out of the most recent church I was in. It was out of sheer grieving and reassessing everything in this walk. Yes, it was in part because of the many issues that we are all familiar with. But the surprise was to find that there was such a 'phenomenon' going on. It wasn't really until coming across Andrew Strom and the numbers of others with uncanny similarities that the thought of "You too?" even struck me.

Don't have a nice ribbon to tie this all up with, but this does seem to stand out large:

Jer 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Backward to go forward and yet still some *will not*

Still to be put into the mix of all of this is the persecuted church and what is going on in other areas of the world. Out of mind...

For now. :-)

**Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2005/2/28 9:49**

Jesus told the church to go to the world. He never told the world to go to the church. He depends upon you and me to go and do His work. We must cultivate a spirit of evangelism within our hearts and obey His words. People are precious in His sight and many of them are in trouble. They are hurting, lost, and need a friend to love them and show them direction. We may think that our gifts are insignificant compared to the world's need, and we may feel that we have no answers. But Jesus can touch them through our hands, be a voice to them through our lips, and listen to their problems through our ears. We are the hope of His glory in the Earth. All that we need to do is to go and preach His good news. He will work with us confirming His word with signs and wonders. +++

**Re: reformation? - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2005/2/28 10:25**

What comes to my mind is Reformation. Especially now after reading church history and reading the likes of Luther and Tyndale,etc....

It seems to me that the church is maybe in a process of more reformation or maybe even just being restored to it's original form as God intended.

I have this funny feeling that another big change is going to take place soon. That we all are all being prepared for something whether it is in our lifetime or our children's (and we are preparing them) But it feels so close. We have to make sure that it is Christ alone that we cling to. That He is our head and our allegiance is to Him. That we have grown in His likeness to reach out to those who come (or are sent) our way, wherever we are (home or building or whatever)

I don't think there is any danger of not washing someone's feet unless we are just locked up in a room in our house and never come out :) Hopefully we are out everyday, at the store, in our day-to-day activities, "expecting" God to send opportunities. Being available to be a light to anyone who needs the light.

God is God. He is capable of making sure His plans are fulfilled. We (I) am just to make myself a willing vessel and listen for His instructions and go along with His plans.

I just recently watched the Luther movie also and couldn't help but think how this has all been planned from the beginning and how it is all in a process. To watch the great changes that the Lord has brought about through His people (sometimes just one man). And each time, they always went against the grain. They had to stand against all odds, against all "religiosity"- even to death.

I am sure at the time, these reformers seemed crazy, or non-conformist. But if you look at it from the big picture, all they cared about was God's glory, His truth and that the people could know the truth.

The last reformation was not the last. There is still more to restore. Obviously, because the church and "christianity" as it is practiced today in buildings with all it's different traditions, is still a ways away from the original church of the new testament or maybe even the one Lord wants for His endtime church.

Just thoughts coming to me....

In Him, Chanin

**Re: reformation - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/28 16:01**

I think it's right to say that we are still in reformation. One of the outcomes from reformation is that the church comes into better focus. Mike has identified the real question.

Quote:

-----'What exactly is the Church?  
-----

I am always surprised how slippery it is to find consensus on precisely what the church is. In pious terms we say she is the bride, or the new man, or the body of Jesus, the word becoming flesh and dwelling among men. We wrestle with trying to be both the salty preservation of holiness and the sweet aroma of Christ. We are torn between sincerely appealing to frail humanity or fearlessly preaching for the glory of God's honor. We are at once inclusive, and exclusive...invasive yet set apart.

In the midst of these tensions, we could easily accuse each other of failing in some aspect. Perhaps we judge the servant of another because we are serving our own expectations. To quote Philologos, "

Quote:

-----What shape is flowing water, driving wind or consuming fire? What will you contain them in?  
-----

The only glue that binds these contradictions is a love that esteems my brothers devotion to Christ as much as it esteems

s my own. Maybe more.

Quote:

-----"but whose feet does he wash?"  
-----

One thing is clear from the response to my question...we all care and hope for the church. I think that is one of the surest signs of being spirit filled.

A couple of quick responses...

From Philologos

Quote:

-----'dissed' of all 'illusions'  
-----

I love clarity of this phrase.. why should Jesus let us keep our illusions?

Mike Balog

Quote:

-----as it stands in this point in time, this place is church to me.  
-----

It occurs to me that, with technologies like "TeamSpeak" or "ISight", for the first time in history we could share worship services or prayer between believers or communities around the planet and get a new perspective of the presence of God that transcends location binding all believers in one Spirit. Ironically, we move from the "collective hives" of our local assemblies, not for isolation but perhaps an even greater sense of catholic unity. I am just wondering out loud.

And finally...while I concern myself with utopian speculation Mike Balog keeps it real.

Quote:

-----Still to be put into the mix of all of this is the persecuted church and what is going on in other areas of the world.  
-----

Staring at the menu of Starbuckian options for western Christianity I am asking, "what kind of church do I want?"...The answer from our persecuted brothers must be "Whatever kind of church you can get."

MC

**Thank You Compton, on: 2005/2/28 16:54**

is that your writing bro? If so, nice writing, thanks for the post, I knew about the Emergent church, but the others not so...  
.I'm going to read the rest of the thread.

God bless you.

Neil

**Ron Bee!, on: 2005/2/28 19:12**

Quote:

-----The emblems of the Spirit most used in scriptures are flowing water, driving wind and consuming fire  
-----

that is a GOOD Word!! I'm going to pray that be buried in my heart!!

a "che" huh?

(I wanna come to Blighty and hold some prayer meetings.....actually to go to the Hebrides and do that...but sleepy ole R eading would be ok...maybe we could go to Liverpool, and deprogram John Scotland in the Name of Jesus!)

I'm s'posed to be typing a letter, but I cant stop reading this thread.

**Re: Ron Bee! - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2005/2/28 20:35**

The key to understanding Fivefold Ministry is function or purpose and not title. titles exist to describe function

**Re: Demonstrative Gospel - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/2/28 22:24**

Thanks to everyone for their thoughts and wisdom. Here is one unifying theme that occurs to me while considering every ones words.

I believe the Church is realizing that a didactic gospel needs to be replaced with a demonstrative gospel. In other words. ..The Word must become flesh, and dwell among men, so that they can see His glory.

Through the Apostolic Reformation, Pentacostal and Charismatic churches, we are wanting to see manifest power of God in the gifts and five-fold offices as recorded in Acts. We need those moments where the spoken word is fused with the spirit of God in such a way that ears and eyes are opened. This anointing accompanied with revelatory signs moves the gospel beyond mere propositional knowledge into prophetic knowledge.

The Emergent Church is an admission that faith by simple doctrinal agreement is weak and hard to connect to. Our modern confession relies too much on the cognitive and not enough on the community. With our Emergent brothers and sisters we are not only building bridges to each other, but also to those ancient ones who have gone before us. When we combine our own music with hymns, our own faith with creeds, our own bible reflection with iconic painting, we are realizing that our church is that same church that was worshipping in the catacombs and synagogues.

Speaking of symbols, I guess that is the ultimate motivation for the Churchless Christians. We want our lives to be symbols that do not represent men, but instead convey Jesus..."Come you who have no money and buy food..." as opposed to symbols of wealth and worldliness. With our churchless bothers and sisters we are jealously gaurding the integrity of the Gospel. "The Word became flesh...not flash!"

Just some more kindling for the flames of discussion...

MC

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2005/2/28 22:41**

Quote:

-----Ratt-a-tatta-tat tat groovy Jazz Cat. I'm envisioning sit-ins with flowers, tea, and nylon string acoustic guitar singalongs.  
-----

:-? no comment.

Quote:

-----Just my humble opinion but I feel that all these movements are the result of people in traditional church tired of a powerless bride that has become a shell of her former self.

-----  
Thank you brother Mike (compton) for your posts about this matter. You have clearly given some large Charismatic movements for our knowledge and pursuit. Personally I think the 3 you have mentioned really aren't the choices for the true apostolic church in our day or the movement that God is going to use for revival. I would say unreservedly that in most of those 3 groups there is so much flippant and false doctrine and ideas sadly. Even though they have a form of what is apostolic and also talk about revival but that does not make it the genuine article.

One big decision that we have to make is are we going to base what we are looking for in the apostolic church on the Scriptures alone or not. Unfortunately the authority and solid foundation of scriptures is misused and disregarded or twisted in some of these movements.

I am studying at Calvary Chapel Bible School right now and I have to say it's very biblical and very close to something like the original church. I could see God using this movement to spark a revival in USA and this world more than other unstable movements. But we have to remember that it is not going to be movements, principles, but rather a MAN that God is going to use to start a revival.

I am not trying to disagree with everything you are saying brother and it is good to look into these things but we have to not look for the "Church" that is going to bring revival but rather let God make "Us" the people who He will use. I like brother Hulse's comment that he wants to be part of the remnant movement, I do to! no matter what denomination or movement let us join into what God is doing.

**Re: revival - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/3/1 1:17**

Thanks Sermonindex for your kind and respectful tone.

As a point of clarification, only the Apostolic Reformation could be considered Charismatic in flavor, while the others seem to cross denominational borders.

I would like to postulate something that has been eating away at me. Maybe I'm holding my head up here for target practice but here I go.

I myself am like many believers...kind of a denominational mutt with DNA from several Godly ancestors. This DNA includes Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Carmichael, Spurgeon, Bonhoeffer, Tozer, Packer, Chambers and many others.

So I hope my point here wasn't to define the right movement. Nor was I trying to put forth a critique of "traditional churches." I attend a healthy mainline denominational church because it has a passion for the lost.

After years of mastering purist doctrinal systems and schools of Christianity, I am asking the question...can Christians connect with each other on a different level? Maybe not---since each denomination or school seems to be rooted in a rejection of the other.

I have shelves full of the best books and writing by the Church's most influential writers. The internet lets me listen to sermons from all over the world. The only thing they all have in common is a simple orthodox creed and a profound devotion to Jesus. Take those similarities away and Finney, Edwards, and Augustine might as well be espousing different religions. They simply were not convinced of the same things but I am convinced they were the same thing; great Christians.

Our western gospel is too didactic. Somehow we need to find ways to hold onto our deep convictions while finding fellowship with other devoted believers. Is there a revival without crossing denominational boundaries? We say that revival begins when we repent of our sins. Do we really know what that means for a globe where all the church is interconnected? What is holy living in the 21st century? Wouldn't true repentance would lead to radically reshift material resources to the poor, the naked and persecuted that belong to Christ. May that day come!

Quote:  
----- But we have to remember that it is not going to be movements, principles, but rather a MAN that God is going to use to start a revival.  
-----

You are convinced that a man is coming to bring revival. How can that be possible? If he comes as a holiness preacher the baptists will reject him, and if he comes as a pentacostal then the charismatics will look down on him. If he comes from the third world, the northern hemisphere will not clothe and feed him. If he comes from the east, then the west will debate theology with him.

The church has always been global but now we are connected. It is because I share your deep hope for spiritual fire that I want to tear down every idol that stands in the way. Perhaps our mythic memory of our revivalist heroes have become idols. Even their greatest revivals were localized. Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, Moody, and others were not worldwide. Furthermore they weren't enduring.

This is not an attack on these Godly men of whom the world was unworthy.

Within our labyrinth of firm beliefs, can we add that God has his "remnant" scattered throughout the church? Like a flooding river that rises equally around every rock, tree trunk, and hillside it swallows, so does the invisible Holy Spirit rise with in the visible church? Maybe that's what you were trying to say and we agree on this point.

I'm not trying to find a way to claim that all segments of beliefs in the church are true...most of our idols will be burned up as the hay, wood, and stubble they are. I am believing God that in all segments of Christianity, even the wacky ones, there are true Christians.

Some may think my words are "divisive" and humanistic. I hope that they are centered in Christ alone.

Let the polemic roasting commence :-o

MC

**Re: revival heroes - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2005/3/1 8:37**

MC,

Quote:

-----Perhaps our mythic memory of our revivalist heroes have become idols.  
-----

This statement really stuck out to me. I have been concerned about this before. But I think it is worth repeating. We have ideals and expectations of how things have been or happened in the past. When I hope we are not missing out by looking unto Jesus alone for what we "need" as far as church or anything else goes.

All of these fine men and women who were used of God are good to read about, but we cannot set our minds on them continuously and hope for the same. We have to set our minds on Christ and hope only in Him. He alone is God and will do as He sees fit.

again, in similar words of Chip Brogden, if we didn't have these teachings, books or sermons (and yes, thank the Lord we do) but would Jesus be enough? Would our love for him compell us to obey Him and follow Him. Because obeying him and following Him is what's important.

I just read a small passage from Oswald Chambers yesterday that went along these lines: **Don't preach salvation, don't preach holiness, don't preach, baptism in the holy Ghost, (i would interject here anything like "revival", etc...) Only preach Jesus Christ and everything will fall into it's place.**

In His love, Chanin

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2005/3/1 9:46

All of these fine men and women who were used of God are good to read about, but we cannot set our minds on them continuously and hope for the same. We have to set our minds on Christ and hope only in Him. He alone is God and will do as He sees fit.

I like that statement! and feel this is so true.

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2005/3/1 11:30

Ever since the Enlightenment, Christianity of the western world had tended to be obsessive with the *purely doctrinal*.

Entering into the 21st century, postmodernity has become the dominant mood of the western society. Perhaps these movements are reactions against the strong emphasis on the purely cognitive.

There are movements that lay emphasis on the *experiential* aspect of the Christian faith. Tired of mere discussions of abstract doctrine, they sought the empowering presence of the Spirit in their lives -- the **charismatic** stream.

There are also movements that emphasise the *social* dimension of the Christian faith. Perhaps because of fundamentalism's reaction against liberalism's Social Gospel, the strong social concerns in the scriptures for the poor and oppressed are quite often mere talk. Thus, some Christians sought to recover practical acts of charity and stand in solidarity with the poor and oppressed -- the **incarnational** stream.

Moreover, there are movements that are beginning to appreciate the value of community, obviously reacting against the strong individualism of modernity. God did not just save individuals, but he save them *into* the Body of Christ. In various ways, these groups tried to revitalise the corporate dimension of church life -- the **communal** stream.

In different ways, these streams magnify what it really means to be the Church. The Church, the pillar and foundation of truth (**doctrinal**), is also the Body of Christ (**communal**), where each member is empowered by the Spirit and endowed with spiritual gifts for the building up of the Body (**charismatic**), such that the Church represents the continuing presence of Christ in the world (**incarnational**).

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/1 11:40

Quote:  
-----Our western gospel is too didactic. Somehow we need to find ways to hold onto our deep convictions while finding fellowship with other devoted believers. Is there a revival without crossing denominational boundaries? We say that revival begins when we repent of our sins. Do we really know what that means for a globe where all the church is interconnected? What is holy living in the 21st century? Wouldn't true repentance would lead to radically reshifting material resources to the poor, the naked and persecuted that belong to Christ. May that day come!  
-----

Ah, the old paradigm shift? The western church too didactic? I don't know. It is certainly an issue which has exercised my thoughts for many a year. I have a quite a bit of experience in missionary settings and am often challenged by their eager evangelism. I met a man in Malawi who had been baptised 6 times. Every time some evangelised him they encouraged him to be baptised; so every time he responded to God he submitted to baptism. A little didactic input might have changed his understanding.

Paul had never visited Colosse but his teaching in Colossians equals anything in the Bible. The concepts are majestic and soaring; should he have kept to something less didactic?

The thoughts I have struggled with are that the gospel was preached to the poor and simple and many responded, but the teaching in the New Testament epistles is by no means 'basic'. There is a way to remain simple in our response and at the same time 'grow up' in our understanding, but I think it has to do with teaching the believers not only what the borders of truth are but also teaching them 'how to walk in the Spirit'; I am not referring to any methodology here. If a man stuffs his head with knowledge he just becomes puffed up, but knowledge on fire is a wonderful thing to behold.

As I read the New Testament I feel a great diversity of experience and operation. There were divergences of doctrine but never the thought that it doesn't really matter, but rather a resolve to press on to know the truth. But this difference of understanding was not allowed to put up walls. The saints at Corinth had some weird ideas about the resurrection, but

Paul nowhere suggests their exclusion. People who persisted in wrong lives were to be excluded but people with wrong views (and they were wrong) were never under threat of expulsion. (not at this level, anyway) The word 'heretic' in Titus 3:10 is a schismatic drawing people to his own party rather than a pedlar of different doctrines.

We are to 'grow up' but 'growing' up always changes things. How can I un-know what I know. The secret of the early church was not an innocent ignorance but in a LIFE which was in the Spirit.

**Re: - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/3/1 12:33**

Quote:

-----  
philologos wrote:

The secret of the early church was not an innocent ignorance but in a LIFE which was in the Spirit.  
-----

To add a few shillings, it is interesting to read what was written to the different churches in response to that life that was flowing through, in and around them. My personally observation is that they were all letters placing boundary lines of operation on that life.

**Re:, on: 2005/3/1 12:48**

Brother Phil,

I think you may be missing the point that Compton is trying to bring up. He may sound idealistic but I think you can be assured that he is "grown up" in the faith and not saying that doctrine or intense knowledge and study of scriptural doctrines or themes is a waste of time.

I think that he is simply stating that revival (if indeed it can happen) cannot happen if we all stay within our own theological camps throwing theological mudballs at each other. What he is expressing is that we must look to our core doctrines as a means of connection to other factions of the Church. The supposition he makes is not to link ourselves with openly practicing Homosexuals who have fooled themselves into the belief that they can also be included in the body, but rather that we can overlook our particular views on subjects like "Predestination" or "Once saved, always saved" types of arguments and concentrate on each other's commitment to Christ as the Nexus of our connection to one another. Thusly, we attain the "community of believers" that the Lord wants us to be. I myself am involved in a multi-denominational prison ministry called Kairos and have served in the prisons alongside Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Nazarenes, United Methodists, Lutherans, Charismatics, and the list goes on. Do, I agree with the doctrinal teachings of all of those churches? No, of course not! But we, all of us, who go into the prisons are hoping to taste something of fellowship with Christ in the faces of the prisoners and we are NEVER disappointed.

One of the most powerful things about that ministry in the eyes of the prisoners is the fact that all of us from these various denoms and non-denoms actually serve Christ side by side without quarrelling about minor doctrinal differences. We go in there and give testimony to how Christ has changed our lives, and we are like Paul when he said, "I preach Christ and Him Crucified". That is what we do, we focus on the major doctrinal points of the church and avoid the divisive and the ministry of Christ to the prisoner is accomplished with all the glory one could ever desire from a revival/church service.

My example is just one practical example of that "Nexus" point that Compton is begging for. What he is also suggesting is that there may, indeed, be many Nexus points or places where we (the Church at large) can meet, connect, and minister together powerfully as we place our denominational Credo's down for the greater Credo's we all share (i.e. Salvation in Christ alone, Christ crucified, buried, resurrected, ascended, and soon coming King, etc...).

Again, he is not suggesting that we personally divorce ourselves from any of our own personally attained beliefs about any of even our minor beliefs and convictions about the peripheral doctrines or interpretations of scripture but rather that we are willing to lay at least "some" of it down, at certain times and at certain "Nexus" points, in order to perform the works that which Christ himself has called us to do, not to mention the ascension into the community that we "ought" to be.

Please don't miss the point he's trying to make. Certainly, being didactic is appropriate and constructive in some situations but being didactic can be equally damaging in other situations. For example, Paul went to visit some of the Brothers in the book of Acts and participated in a good and proper Temple worship session with some Jewish believers. He even



participated in some ritual washings (Old covenant practice). He could have become extremely didactic at that point and preached a sermon to them about how Christ has washed us once for all at the Cross, but he refrained because this was his "Nexus" with the Jewish believers in that location. He opted to maintain his fellowship with them over his own personal doctrinal positions. He practiced what he preached in Romans 14 and realized that perhaps the faith of his Jewish brothers here was not in error but perhaps just a little weak and so he "put up with those whose faith is weak". Just an example for you from scriptures. There you go, didactic effectiveness.

In Christ,  
Steve  
(Picky400)

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/1 13:43**

Quote:  
-----I think you may be missing the point that Compton is trying to bring up. He may sound idealistic but I think you can be assured that he is "grown up" in the faith and not saying that doctrine or intense knowledge and study of scriptural doctrines or themes is a waste of time.  
-----

Steve  
I think you may be missing the point that I was discussing :-), but I'll wait to hear what Mike Compton has to say. I think you have interpreted my post as a challenge to MC. It was not, just a widening of our conversation.

**Re: Irreducible Complexity - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/3/1 16:26**

I thought I might try to improve my earlier point Admittedly I am probably in over my head but I do feel there is something worth wrestling with here. This may explain to some why I identified myself favorably with 3 certain church "movements" despite my personal misgivings.

I liked Picky's reference to Paul and the submission to Jewish ritual. I think that touches on the subject.

First, how could we remove doctrinal instruction and teaching from our gospel message? I hope no one would ever think that someone as wordy as myself would be afraid of some good old fashioned homily!

Others have expressed this issue better. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wondered about a "religionless" Christianity...where we would not have to practice religion to have saving faith in Jesus. He felt that asking a 20th century man to start thinking about himself in religious terms is placing dishonest burdens upon him. After all, it wasn't that man's fault he was born into an age of scientific purism and cultural pluralism.

We are fond of saying that Christianity is a relationship not a religion but Bonhoeffer's suggestion still catches me off guard. His aim is reassuring; in order for a prophetic Christ to be made manifest to a godless world we must preserve the gospel even at the expense of our beloved expressions of it. This is what it means to serve in the 20th century. Just as Christ was a man for others, post-modern Christianity must be for others.

If all of this sounds like dreaded liberal or social Christianity then maybe our gospel has become too didactic and is fit only for our churches.

We should spare people our religion in order to confront them with a secular Jesus whom they can not hide from. If our message is that Christ has overcome the sin of the world, then we must overcome evil for others by taking up the hard work of bettering men's lives. "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!" must be illustrated with positivism and not piety. This is what I meant by wondering if our revivalist heroes have become idols. They brought a powerful new form of preaching to both Europe and America. Our message also must come in a powerful new form.

Borrowing a question from intelligent design I ask "can we uncover a trustworthy Gospel that is irreducibly complex.?" If we love God and all men from every tribe, we must recover the simplest saving faith message that does no dishonor to God and no deception to men. I think this is what Paul taught.

Since Bonhoeffer's death the evangelical church, at least in my country, has grown more religious; a conservative restoration reflex in the face of irreligion and immorality. We have a scripted apologetic for every obstacle to our theology. In an

age of skepticism and higher criticism, we are too nervous to let intelligence people have their doubts. I think this is also being too didactic.

Regarding our divisional doctrinal systems...they were important for the past 200-500 years and so I am a little disoriented that they seem less important to me now. I am mindful of Paul's warning to Timothy about keeping sound doctrine but I doubt he was talking about the truckloads of exegesis, traditions, myths, and opinions we fight for.

I heard a story about the apostle John in Ephesus at the close of his life. He was too weak to speak publicly for very long, but often the younger men would carry him in and he would say to the congregation, "Little children, love one another." Apparently that got on some people's nerves who craved "deeper" things enough to complain, asking him why he repeated these instructions so much. John answered, "Because it is the Lord's command, and if it's all you do, it will be enough."

Like the world has come of age, I think the church has come of age. Let's do away with childish things, and put our big boy pants on. ;- ) It is inevitable because Jesus asked the Father, "that they may be one as we are one."

MC

**I love this!, on: 2005/3/1 16:28**

Bro Compton,  
this is great and so true!

Quote:  
----- If he comes as a holiness preacher the baptists will reject him, and if he comes as a pentacostal then the charismatics will look down on him. If he comes from the third world, the northern hemisphere will not clothe and feed him. If he comes from the east, then the west will debate theology with him.  
-----

I'm a Jew, and sometimes I think, feel....that my people have always SAID they want Messiah, but Whoever came, they would kill...HE CAME, and they refused to see Him.

What they wrote about a humble one-eyed black man, who had a scarred face from the ravages of smallpox, they excoriated William Seymour, and you know where some of the most vituperative comments were from?....the "church".

Same thing with a mighty apostolic figure like John Sung....you read his diaries, and 90%..maybe 95% of his persecution came from the lukewarm half dead elements of the "church", intent on protecting the orthodoxy. it's sad.

I went to a house gathering here, it was a bunch of renewal types, Holy Ghosts 'drunks', and it was grievous, and there was something that did NOT ring true....but you know what? lil ole Neil isn't gonna dictate terms of revival to God, I'm gonna let God be God! (lol) betcha He's happy to hear that.

There's a point to my blitherings, ummmmm.....When the Holy Spirit gave me a vision of a prayer tent, ala 1st century

at our post-modern country fair, the only ones who expressed ANY interest (outside of an annointed Tutsi woman believer who lives in Nairobi) were those renewal types.....they are the ones who are gathering a Christian drumming circle, the ones who are organizing a "dream-interpetation" team.

is that stuff I get into?

no, but so what, I get into doing the Father's work, and He says to call His lost sheep, and if drumming circles, and dream interpatations will draw the lost to drink from the Living Water, and give it up to the Lamb of God...then lets go! lets make church!

that church might be in tent, that church might be four souls in an old office trailer lit by flourescent lights praying all night in the Spirit, in tears....

we need more tears, we gotta quit eating our young.

This Christian faith is new to this Jew, but I have noticed that the church loves to munch on its young and on the fallen of its elite, loves to cast stones, and furrow its brows and yammer on about "moral values".

we need more tears.

I love your writing bro, God's gave you the gift of a fine mind and the ability to see thru the haze, and say it with tact and love.....don't stop, press on.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/1 16:44**

Quote:  
-----Others have expressed this issue better. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wondered about a "religionless" Christianity...where we would not have to practice religion to have saving faith in Jesus. He felt that asking a 20th century man to start thinking about himself in religious terms is placing dishonest burdens upon him. Afterall, it wasn't that man's fault he was born into an age of scientific purism and cultural pluralism.  
-----

I've never been able to trust Bonhoeffer. He wrote some very quotable stuff but I can never touch the spirit of the man. I can understand that we need to be able to preach the gospel in the language of those who need to hear. We can see that in Acts 17 very clearly. Not a single Bible verse, but this is evangelism and not church.

The church is not a house for 21st century, post-modernist man, but for God. The only person who needs to feel at home there is God. It is His house, at his personal disposal. My preferences are irrelevant, so are cultural preferences. The question for 'church' is what kind of place will God feel at 'home' in?

Does the church exist to perform evangelism, or is the purpose of evangelism to prepare the sinner for the gathering of the saints? in other words the first steps towards becoming 'church'? Perhaps the question we really need to pursue is 'what is the church'? Then we can decide if it is succeeding or failing. How could we answer that question until we know its purpose?

The proclamation, or kerugma, is infinitely translatable. The teaching, or didache is very precise.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/1 16:56**

Quote:  
-----We are fond of saying that Christianity is a relationship not a religion but Bonhoeffer's suggestion still catches me off guard. His aim is reassuring; in order for a prophetic Christ to be made manifest to a godless world we must preserve the gospel even at the expense of our beloved expressions of it. This is what it means to serve in the 20th century. Just as Christ was a man for others, post-modern Christianity must be for others.  
-----

What exactly are our 'beloved expressions of it'? How differently can you express it and it still be gospel? I am ready to abandon man made 'beloved expressions' but I am not ready to abandon propositional revelation, and post-modernism can never communicate with propositional revelation because it believes there is no truth and no means of communicating it. It believes that truth lies in the listener, where the gospel believes that truth lies in the speaker.

Post-modernism says real communication is impossible; truth is what is truth to me irrespective of what you said. What

kind of gospel can we communicate to such? It doesn't matter what you said, what matters is how I feel? This is the kind of spiritual hedonism that Paris Reidhead spots so accurately.

The gospel says Jesus Christ is Lord, this is the spot where you kneel! It cannot compromise with its hearers, its power lies in its faithfulness to its commission.

**amen, on: 2005/3/1 19:00**

brother Ron, you wrote:

The gospel says Jesus Christ is Lord, this is the spot where you kneel! It cannot compromise with its hearers, its power lies in its faithfulness to its commission.

(the quote thing doesn't work on thisputer)

amen! This is a grand thread.....

in my lack of knowledge . I believe the key to church lays in the apostolic calling of Acts 6:4

"and we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

for me, and TO me that is half the thrust of my personal burden and the foundational "to-do"s of the church, the other is

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified".

1 Cor 2:2

Church: Jesus Christ, Him crucified, prayer, Ministry of the Word.

to me, that's what church should be, about and composed of.

**Re: Philologos - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/3/1 19:54**

Like I said, I might be in over my head abit!

The term post-modern is kinda trendy right now. Maybe I should avoid it. I am not post-modern in the sense that I do believe God has provided a universe where I can have real knowledge of his word. I hold to a confident epistemology...of some things.

By "beloved expressions" I am referring to our BELIEFS NOT IN THE GOSPEL BUT BELIEFS ABOUT THE GOSPEL. I may be painting myself into a self-contradiction but I cannot accept that all of my beliefs are true, however convincing.

That may be the "post-modern" part about me. Even though I know what I believe, I would rather believe your doctrine then be separate from you. In the end though I am not insisting in this type of thinking and I do not expect others to follow suit.

Quote:

-----What exactly are our 'beloved expressions of it'? How differently can you express it and it still be gospel?  
-----

I think there are many expressions for sure. The problem is that we might be guilty of a little slight of hand here. If only our gospel was so simple....

Quote:

-----...Jesus Christ is Lord, this is the spot where you kneel!  
-----

But of course you and I know differently. (Shhh! let's not tell anyone!) We think we are buying a pretty picture but really it's a puzzle with a dozen sets of instructions. Picking the right instruction means the difference between being a goat or a sheep!

Some preach the need for a second regeneration, while still others tell of a "full salvation". Some preach irresistible grace, while still others preach pelagianism. Some preach that believers can bring demonic curses upon themselves, while others preach that we are surrounded by God's power. Some preach that Catholics are idol worshippers, while Charismatics are practicing doctrines of demons. Some preach that Calvinism is a license to sin, while others preach that Calvinism is Paul's justification by faith message. Gosh, we can't even agree on the sequence of the doctrines' of salvation. And of course none of this confusion even includes the eastern church. To dismiss one of these beliefs is to slight great men of God.

Our planet is getting smaller and our different beliefs are trying to occupy the same space. If I see another book, radio, or website ministry dedicated to "exposing heresy", attacking brothers and sisters I have walked with, my heart is going to break! We can hope that this doesn't represent an epistemological crisis but our children are going to be more honest. ( Even if they don't know what that big word means.:-P )

In previous centuries we might have been able to survive in local geographical regions of thought but the time is coming when the church will have to find ways of holding to individual convictions while at the same time letting them go. We need a new contract of that replaces skepticism in my brother with confidence in the Lord. (We can let the lawyers settle the details...)

Of course I am also concerned about heresy. Perhaps there are other heresies such as not esteeming one another in the name of Christ. I realize it's a messy problem, maybe impossible to fix because we each love our Lord too much to risk misrepresenting Him.

I liked Bonhoeffer's "religionless" concept because it seemed to address this issue of asking people to repent of sin at the same time we ask them to repent of sin. But in the end, Christ's prayer for us to be one may be a statement of heavenly reality only... which is fine I suppose.

Brothers, what are your feelings on this matter? (Do I need some more books to read? ;- ) Should I wait for the Lord and his winnowing fork to set things straight perhaps?

Thanks Neilgin

Quote:

-----"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified".  
-----

Anyone who claims this verse is someone I want to associate with!

God bless you guys!

**Re: quick note - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/3/1 20:31**

Philo,

For what it's worth, I wanted to clarify something about the concept of a "post-modern Christianity." It's not that our Christianity should become post-modern which would be a disaster. Rather Christianity should provide a unified coherent message that speaks with glorious simplicity to a murky post-modern world.

Ironically, our present fractured and self-contradictory church is closer to being post-modern in nature. Imagine the reaction to a global people that are consistent in word and deed around the planet. The only coherency I can imagine now is a dying of everything we hold dear in our faith except unity with all who believe Christ crucified and resurrected.

MC

Re: - posted by Smokey (), on: 2005/3/1 22:57

It makes no difference at all what preachers are preaching in a post modern world. Preachers are going to preach what they believe. It is no surprise to me, and anyone who is a "Christian" that preachers are preaching a smorgesboard of beliefs, and they can not all be right. Every era of church history has had its share of "preachers" preaching what they believe. We need to be aware that these "preachers" are the wolves in sheeps clothing that we have been cautioned about . Look at Matthew 7:15 and Acts 20:29. Also look at Romans 16:17&18 it is of the utmost importanc that you do not follow men, but Scripture, and the Holy Spirit.

Quote:

Compton wrote:

Like I said, I might be in over my head abit!

The term post-modern is kinda trendy right now. Maybe I should avoid it. I am not post-modern in the sense that I do believe God has provided a unive rse where I can have real knowledge of his word. I hold to a confident epistemology...of some things.

By "beloved expressions" I am referring to our BELIEFS NOT IN THE GOSPEL BUT BELIEFS ABOUT THE GOSPEL. I may be painting myself into a self-contradiction but I cannot accept that all of my beliefs are true, however convincing.

That may be the "post-modern" part about me. Even though I know what I believe, I would rather believe your doctrine then be separate from you. In t he end though I am not insisting in this type of thinking and I do not expect others to follow suit.

Quote:

-----What exactly are our 'beloved expressions of it'? How differently can you express it and it still be gospel?  
-----

I think there are many expressions for sure. The problem is that we might be guilty of a little slight of hand here. If only our gospel was so simple....

Quote:

-----...Jesus Christ is Lord, this is the spot where you kneel!  
-----

But of course you and I know differently. (Shhh! let's not tell anyone!) We think we are buying a pretty picture but really it's a puzzle with a dozen sets of instructions. Picking the right instruction means the difference between being a goat or a sheep!

Some preach the need for a second regeneration, while still others tell of a "full salvation". Some preach irresistable grace, while still others preach pe lagianism. Some preach that believers can bring demonic curses upon themselves, while others preach that we are surrounded by God's power. Some preach that Catholics are idol worshippers, while Charismatics are practicing doctrines of demons. Some preach that Calvinism is a license to sin, whil e others preach that Calvinism is Paul's justification by faith message. Gosh, we can't even agree on the sequence of the doctrines' of salvation. And of course none of this confusion even includes the eastern church. To dismiss one of these beliefs is to slight great men of God.

Our planet is getting smaller and our different beliefs are trying to occupy the same space. If I see another book, radio, or website ministry dedicated to "exposing heresy", attacking brothers and sisters I have walked with, my heart is going to break! We can hope that this doesn't represent an epistemol ogical crisis but our children are going to be more honest. (Even if they don't know what that big word means.:-P )

In previous centuries we might have been able to survive in local geographical regions of thought but the time is coming when the church will have to fi nd ways of holding to individual convictions while at the same time letting them go. We need a new contract of that replaces skepticism in my brother with confidence in the Lord. (We can let the lawyers settle the details...)

Of course I am also concerned about heresy. Perhaps there are other heresies such as not esteeming one another in the name of Christ. I realize it's a messy problem, maybe impossible to fix because we each love our Lord to much to risk misrepresenting Him.

I liked Bonhoeffers "religionless" concept because it seemed to address this issue of asking people to repent of sanity at the same time we ask them to repent of sin. But in the end, Christ's prayer for us to be one may be a statement of heavenly reality only... which is fine I suppose.

Brothers, what are your feelings on this matter? (Do I need some more books to read? ;-) Should I wait for the Lord and his winnowing fork to set thing s straight perhaps?

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God bless you guys!  
-----

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/2 4:06

Quote:  
-----I liked Bonhoeffer's "religionless" concept because it seemed to address this issue of asking people to repent of sin at the same time we ask them to repent of sin. But in the end, Christ's prayer for us to be one may be a statement of heavenly reality only... which is fine I suppose.  
-----

Mike C

Christ's prayer for unity has an important introduction; Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

(Joh 17:20-21 KJV) The unity for which He prayed was a presupposition that it is part of the true line of apostolic succession (not the Catholic distortion of that phrase), and it is 'word' based supposition... 'through their word'. This is not touchy-feely oneness but a oneness that is based on a recognised and common authority.

The ancient word is still true 'Can two walk together unless they be agreed?' There are many things we can do together without being agreed. But unless we start at the same point and are heading for the same destination our 'walk together' can only at best be sporadic.

To me it is ominous that Open Theism and Post-Modernism and questions about the inerrancy of the scripture are all around at the same time. The ancient certainties are being questioned. I am not talking about 'Evangelical' certainties; they desperately need to be questioned. The 'culture' of evangelicalism is more and more distanced from 'the word of the apostles'; it is now simply pragmatism with a choir.

I hear your heart in all this, so none of this is intended as any kind of a rebuke but of 'iron sharpening iron'. When I see the confusion, the schismatic nature of much of evangelical testimony, the 'biting of one another', like you my heart aches. I know His heart aches too. I know some things that I know... (to quote Mr Runsfeldt.. I thought his words made clear sense and the harping criticism only shows the shallow concepts of the reporters)... in the past I have often concluded my postings with the letters 'wkip' "we know in part". But even though we know in part some things are so clear as to be beyond question for those who receive the testimony of the scripture.

As an evangelistic concept Bonhoeffer's religionless Christianity is legitimate, but we need to recall that his words are coming from the bankruptcy of a Lutheranism which had abandoned its trust in 'sola scriptura'. Like Barth Bonhoeffer is a protest at the failure of German rationalistic Christianity. Both these men had prodigious intellect but, I believe, defective views of scripture.

Re: From another perspective... - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/3/2 8:10

Finding all this truly instructive and well stated. Agree that much iron sharpening is being done and find also that the same sentiments are being expressed in different voices of wisdom from those who have walked much further down this road.

A whole smattering of thoughts stand out from all this;  
Ron

Quote:  
-----The 'culture' of evangelicalism is more and more distanced from 'the word of the apostles'; it is now simply pragmatism with a choir.  
-----

Neil

Quote:  
-----"and we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."  
-----

Don't miss the intention, but what of the 'waiters'? More on this bellow...  
Ron

Quote:  
-----My preferences are irrelevant, so are cultural preferences. The question for 'church' is what kind of place will God feel at 'home' in?  
-----

Yes, precisely.

Ron again

Quote:  
-----As I read the New Testament I feel a great diversity of experience and operation. There were divergences of doctrine but never the thought that it doesn't really matter, but rather a resolve to press on to know the truth.  
-----

Sam (Agent001), good to hear from you as always, that all those streams flowed together...

Chanin

Quote:  
-----When i hope we are not missing out by looking unto Jesus alone for what we "need" as far as church or anything else goes.  
-----

Always our sanity checker around here. How many wayward topics have come to a blessed end by you reminding us of the sense of *'because thou hast left thy first love.'*

Mike C

Quote:  
-----After years of mastering purist doctrinal systems and schools of Christianity, I am asking the question...can Christians connect with each other on a different level? Maybe not---since each denomination or school seems to be rooted in a rejection of the other.  
-----

That is what boggles the mind. Myself and Hulsey were discussing this in the sense of adding the "ism" to it. If it was because of emphasis (As Sam pointed out) it would be one thing. Just taking a look around here and the different aspects and 'denominational' thinking present from different speakers, it's not impossible after all. Can still glean much without having to give over into a 'mindset'. Still remain a bit ignorant of which 'system' is the one I should be inclined to marry myself to and it's on purpose for the exact same reasons you mentioned. "No-denominational" am more fond of.

Greg

Quote:  
-----One big decision that we have to make is are we going to base what we are looking for in the apostolic church on the Scriptures alone or not. Unfortunately the authority and solid foundation of scriptures is misused and disregarded or twisted in some of these movements.  
-----

No comment needed.

Steve

Your points are well taken as well, to be stripped of all that is unnecessary and still hold to what is sound doctrine (2 Tim ) again, it *shouldn't* be an impossibility, but I think a large part of the problem might be in part caused by something I hope I can draw our attention to in what follows shortly.

Mike C again and one that I was trying to find:

Quote:  
-----We have a scripted apologetic for every obstacle to our theology. In an age of skepticism and higher criticism, we are too nervous to let intelligence people have their doubts.  
-----

Thanks brother, we have touched on this elsewhere and think it was Ron who mentioned something to the effect of a large body of teaching being always 'practical'. The mystery and wonder and awe, the humbling realization that it is just the fact, that we are the creatures. Or to put it another way, with probably the best quote to come through here in awhile (Dian, thanks sister), which had to do with I think the flow of scriptural inerrancy and the ideals of "literal fundamentalism";

Quote:  
-----What is literal fundamentalism? If God created all of us, how could he be cruel in allowing all of us to go to hell? Can't he do whatever



er he wishes with his own creation? The creator isn't cruel even if he chooses to destroy his creation and begin again. He can do this as many times as he likes. This whole conversation makes me think of some sci-fi movie where the robots take over.

-----

Will carry this train of thought over into the next response.

**Re: Missing from all this... - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/3/2 9:44**

Wrote this all out around this time yesterday and held back as I followed along with more responses coming in, to think this through some more. Thought about changing some of it but maybe just to preempt it a bit...

Certainly there is no one way of doing anything. My only concern is to be raptured into God's thought.

Something that I have been musing on quite a bit lately and a message from Major Ian Thomas I listened to even touched on it, could dig it up if of any interest... Is in the sense of these words from our Lord to Peter;

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you wished. But when you grow old, you shall stretch forth your hands and another shall gird you and carry you where you do not wish.*

*He spoke this signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, Follow Me. Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following (the one who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, who is he who betrays You?)*

*Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, Lord, and what of this one?*

*Jesus said to him, If I desire that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. Joh 21:18-22*

The flow of thought that the Major was bring out was in the essence of what the Lord commands us individually, not 'individualistic', nor bypassing what is plainly stated already throughout scripture. But if we are honest with ourselves, we know when that still small voice is speaking to us and what the Lord is telling me and what He is telling you could be polar opposites without contradicting anything that we know is true. Find much of this in Oswald Chambers train of thought. We each have marching orders in the army of the Lord, different divisions but one and the same Commander over all. We are the ones under submission (gladly I might add) but there is also that element of revolt within our ranks, trying to subvert and divide. Don't want to stretch this too far but maybe if we were humbled a bit more...

I will just get on with it. Sorry for the length.

From yesterdays musings;

~~~~~  
The same and one Spirit that is in Jesus Christ lives in us, if we could just realize that.

It does seem that the biggest difference between the church here in this side of the globe and where it will cost you your physical life is a preoccupation with it's self, no different the world. James indicted us prophetically a long time ago and yet his words fail to leave the lash, being softened and applied to everyone but the hearers, ourselves.

*From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

*Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?*

*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, th*

*ou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*

*Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

*For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4*

All the divisions, preferences, lopsided preaching, entertainment replacement 'a' musement, meaning not thinking, 'smooth things', 'felt' needs...While our own brethren are being slaughtered for their faith. Seems we don't have just diverse opinions of what the church is, more like two different religions.

How much more narrow would the broad road become if persecution were to come to this overindulgent side of the world? A thinning of the herd on a grand scale one would think.

But to just stand back and look at all this, to ask the real question; What sayeth the Lord? What has already been spoken? To the churches 2000 years ago from our Lords own lips? What was the fate of the apostles? Of what firm foundation was the church built upon?

Please, don't listen to me, my opinion is worthless drivel nor am I interested in making some kind of judgment. Fact is we are missing it in the whole. We, by and large have forgotten our history and ignored the plight of our brethren that know something of what 'cost' means.

And we trifle with the smallness of church 'issues'. We try to make Paul's words colliquative to our present state by making an analogy out of them and it falls flat;

*"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

*For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

*So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

*Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak,*

*knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." 2Co 4:8-18*

We are not persecuted, we are barely harassed, hardly bothered, yet we bemoan ourselves, 'our plight.' We seem to be missing it altogether.

So the question is raised; What of it? Since we don't have this problem. Shouldn't we have joy in our hearts instead of all this dourness? Is this all just waxing eloquently or do we see the issue in the light? We ought to judge ourselves but we are remiss to do so.

Just wanted to draw our attention to what seems so glaringly obvious, that we are primarily concerned with ourselves in our comfort and ease while even right now our very own brethren are laying down their very lives in unspeakable torture, true hardship, death. Of what true joy must they know to endure such treatment and continue on.

The one and same Spirit dwells in us?

~~~~~

Past history:

*At Tarsus in Cilicia, the birthplace of the apostle Paul, there were imprisoned, A. D. 290, three pious Christians, namely, Tharacus, Probus; and Andronicus; who, having been brought to prison, before the tribunal, and to the rack, and having suffered beyond measure for the name of the Lord and the faith in Jesus Christ, were finally put to death, concerning which we shall notice and present to the reader the judicial proceedings, as we have found them in ancient authors. From Act. Procons.*

Excerpts:

*The President said, "Do not think that I shall sentence thee at once. I shall cause thee to be put to death by degrees."*

*Tharacus answered, "Whatever thou intendest to do, do at once, and do not threaten."*

*The President said, "If thou think, that some women will come and embalm thy body, thou art greatly mistaken, for it is my intention that nothing shall remain of thee."*

*Tharacus replied, "Do with my body as pleaseth thee, now as well as after my death.", "Maximian," said the Proconsul, "break his jaws, and tear his lips."*

*Tharacus answered, "True, thou hast crushed and marred my face; but thou hast quickened my soul."*

*The President said, "Thou wretched man! Desist from thy vain thoughts, and sacrifice; that thou mayest be delivered from these pangs."*

*Tharacus replied, "Dost thou think I am a fool or a madman, and that I, who trust in the Lord, shall not live in heaven? Thou mayest deprive me of this temporal life for a little while; but thou wilt thereby cast thine own soul into eternal damnation."*

*The President said to the executioners, "Put the branding irons into the fire, and brand him on his cheeks or shoulders."*

*Tharacus answered, "Though thou inflict many more torments than these upon me, thou shalt nevertheless not turn the servant of God to the shameful idolatry of devils, to worship them."*

*The President said, "Bring a razor; cut off his skin; shave his head bald, and put burning coals upon it."*

*Tharacus replied, "And though thou cause my whole body to be flayed, I shall still not depart from my God., who strengthens me, to endure all the weapons of your torturing."*

*The President said, "Get the branding irons; let them get still hotter, and apply them to all his members and joints."*

*Tharacus, as he suffered this, cried out. "May the Lord look down from heaven, and judge!" he President said, "What lord dost thou call upon, thou accursed fellow?"*

*Tharacus answered, "The Lord whom thou dost not know, and who recompenses every one according to his works."*

*The President said, "And shall I not exterminate thee, as I have told thee? Yea, even thy remains I shall burn, and scatter thy ashes to the wind; that the women may not come, and wind thy dead body in cloth to embalm it with precious ointments and spices."*

*Tharacus replied, "I have said it, and say so still, do what thou wilt: thou hast full power over my body in this world."*

*The President said, "Put him back into prison, and keep him until the next time for the wild beasts. Let another be brought before the tribunal."*

<http://www.homecomers.org/mirror/martyrs018.htm>  
MARTYRS MIRROR

~~~~~  
Recent:

Christian Conference Hears How China's Christians Suffer for their Faith

By Michael Ireland

Chief Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

November 12, 2004

LONDON, ENGLAND (ANS) -- Speaking at the recent International Christian Human Rights Conference at Westminster Chapel in London, Chinese Christian leader Peter Xu said: "They hung me up across an iron gate, then they yanked open the gate and my whole body lifted until my chest nearly split in two. I hung like that for four hours."

That is how Peter Xu Yongze, the founder of one of the largest religious movements in China, described his treatment during one of five jail sentences on account of his belief in Christianity, at the conference attended by at least 1,000 delegates.

Mr Xu, 61, is not the only Chinese Christian to suffer for his faith. Both Catholics and Protestants have long complained of persecution by the Communist authorities, and human rights groups claim the problem is getting worse, writes Kate McGeown on the British Broadcasting Corporation web site.

According to the Jubilee Campaign, an interdenominational lobbying group, about 300 Christians are in detention in China at any one time, and that number is set to rise, McGeown said.

"China's new generation of leaders are trying to consolidate control of the country as it goes through rapid social and economic changes," said Wilfred Wong, a parliamentary officer for the Jubilee Campaign.

"The Communists feel threatened by any popular ideology which is different from their own," he said.

<http://www.worthynews.com/christian-persecution/christian-conference-suffer.html>

~~~~~  
Just food for thought.

And prayer

Can't help but wonder what might transpire if the Lord were to send out missionary's from the true church persecuted. The pessimistic side says no one wants to hear it out here, too 'depressing'.

Am doubtful frankly that Paul or the Lord Himself would be welcome in our churches if they didn't just concentrate on grace, gifts and blessings.

We can hardly give but a nod and little of our time of prayer for those that *feel* persecution. We have become like spoiled little brats.

Certainly the truth of; Act 17:26,27 "*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, **having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place**, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,*" cannot be overlooked, but... what was our complaint again?

More and more am finding this ultra-light 'affliction', financial woes, backslidden loved ones, 'circumstances', living in this modern day Sodom just dressed up and glossed over, yes some of it is very grievous, but it really amounts to the equivalent of a annoying fly buzzing about compared to feeling the fist or the lash, the hatred and despising.

Am neither overly angry nor overburdened with sadness. But there is always the sense of grief and sorrow mixed in with the peace that comes from the Lord.

The creation groans, I groan...

Long for the completion of the book;

"He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

Rev 22:20,21

**Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2005/3/2 10:15**

I think the number one and most important movement is the one were we personally move closer toward God, and once that is established "and to some including myself that in itself could take a lifetime" we have to positively have our feet on solid ground with Him and when that is achieved you can bet He will guide us on to our destiny. I am for any movement that brings folks closer to the Lord, but these people have to be able to say at the end of their journey God led me here and if you can't say that, any Church, Place, Ministry, or Office or etc.

you end up at, you will still feel a void in your spirit this is why it is so very important to be led by the spirit and not man, Man is easy to follow you can see his every move with God your spirit led and you must have a very intimate relationship with him to follow the spirit. You can be Churched or Unchurched as long as you feel this is were God wants you personally you and only you will know this, there is a stirring going on but remember when you jump in to the pot you could be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine seek God first and he will direct your steps.

God Bless

Mr. Bill

**Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2005/3/2 11:15**

crsschk wrote:

Quote:

-----Sam (Agent001), good to hear from you as always, that all those streams flowed together...

It is good to hear from you too. Now at least I know one person have read my post. :>

I couldn't resist participating in this thread because it is exciting to see **Mike C** around here. It's rare to have someone who could rant as much as **philologos** yet still makes a lot of sense!

Back to the original three movements -- I am concerned that while they need not be mutually exclusive (as I said, I see each carrying a stream of truth, though not without flaws), they often perceive themselves as the latest and greatest (and perhaps only) move of the Spirit on earth today. There are also many pitfalls that each movement might fall into without humbly accepting the correction of other Christians.

Obviously, I will not deny the importance of truth and doctrine in the Christian faith. However, I do agree with **philologos** that Christians today have to re-consider the meaning of "the Church". What is the ultimate goal of the Church? Is evangelism the end or the means to something else? What are we to think of denominationalism today in the 21st century?

I also agree with **Mike C.** that it is time for Christians to seriously ponder and act upon the significance of Christian unity. After all, it is the main point of the Lord's longest prayer in the gospels (John 17), and a constant emphasis within the NT (Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12, etc.). I think church history thus far shows that the idea of oneness is more or less just a theory to most Christians. I note especially that while we already share the oneness in the Spirit, Paul exhorted us to "**make every effort to keep** the unity of Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). He was quite clear that this is not an easy task and will require our utmost effort, that to achieve these would require us to "*be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love*" (v. 2) -- qualities that I seldom see among Christians today.

Just my share of ranting. :>

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/2 13:02

Quote:  
-----The only coherency I can imagine now is a dying of everything we hold dear in our faith except unity with all who believe Christ crucified and resurrected.  
-----

But which Christ? The Christ of experience? the Christ of speculation or the Christ of biblical revelation?

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/3/3 3:44

Quote:  
-----But which Christ? The Christ of experience? the Christ of speculation or the Christ of biblical revelation?  
-----

Well I am really receiving much good from this conversation. You are all sharpening any iron I might have. I want to try and share what has been forming in my heart during the course of our discussion. I am speaking as a christian who is not a pastor or elder caring for a flock.

Philologos, the correct answer to your recent two emails is of course the Christ of biblical revelation.

We cannot lose the bible that was preserved through torture and travail just to hold hands and smile blissfully, falling backwards into a foamy bubble bath prepared for us by Mystery Babylon herself!! Now I must ask if I do indeed hold to the Christ of the bible. I am willing to let the scriptures have residence in my heart but I often make Jesus knock at the door. We know that we can't simply combine inerrant gears and cogs of doctrine into a mechanical heart and say "Here is Christ's heart." We know that only the Spirit gives life. The Spirit keeps us from becoming both pagans and pharisees.

I would agree that Bonhoeffer's neo-orthodoxy left him with a deficient view of scripture but so has my American conservatism. If my view of scripture wasn't so deficient, I would know Jesus as MY holy metric and not my brothers. If I knew Jesus' words I would see my brothers as He sees them rather than objects that I measure. Weren't they part of the joy that was set before Him upon the cross? The tighter I bind myself to those who are offensive, weak, selfish, errant, and downright wacky the more perfectly I am bound to Jesus.

I see this church down the street lavishing their wealth on themselves, celebrating the resurrection with little love for the cross. They sing "All I want is you" and my heart burns at their musical mockery. I want to air-drop in on the stage with a 50 caliber prophecy that their praise is an offense to God's nostrils. Instead Jesus takes measure of me. When did I ever respond to an imposition of His truth upon my beliefs? I am talking about their blindness in this area or the other, not unrepentant immorality which must be confronted by spiritual men in their fellowship. There is a direct solution for sin; a broken sinner can be mended at the cross but spiritual darkness needs light from the Spirit. Our sound doctrine is not that light, though it can describe the light that accompanies it.

I claim that I fix my eyes on Jesus who is the author and finisher of my faith. This claim is put to the test when I see those other living "books" Jesus is working on. The unclean woman thought, "If I can touch the hem of His garment I will be healed." If I was the Lord, I might have corrected her for such poor superstitious theology but He affirmed her faith with power. (Jesus wasn't a very good Protestant in my opinion!)

Jesus is affirming my little faith as well. I can't walk on water anymore then Peter could. That is really the gospel I believe in. It is the testimony of a nail scarred hand that reached down for me, His grasp strengthening mine...

Quote:  
-----...I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.~"  
-----

How do I hold to the testimony of Jesus when I look at these crazy churches? I recall a scene in the excellent movie, "The Wars to End All Wars." The film, borrowing from historic accounts, depicted Scottish soldiers learning to survive in a Japanese POW camp through Christian love. In one scene some prisoners are allowed to perform Beethoven's 9th on crude, rusty, wheezy, handmade instruments. Over their dissonant and sick bellows, the narrator described the music, capturing a hint of Jesus' love for His bride:

"The music we heard that night was less than perfect. In fact it was bloody terrible. But we didn't care...in our hearts we heard what it could be. We heard the true spirit of the music and that was pure freedom."

There are Christians whose music would embarrass "my" Jesus. If I judge them, maybe my Jesus isn't the Christ of biblical revelation after all.

Bless you guys!

MC

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/3 5:56

Quote:  
-----MC writes:  
"The music we heard that night was less than perfect. In fact it was bloody terrible. But we didn't care...in our hearts we heard what it could be. We heard the true spirit of the music and that was pure freedom."  
-----

Ah this is wonderful quotation!

Doctrinal statements were created to exclude error, but the organized church has always used them to exclude people. Paul pleads for open hearts and open arms in Romans. Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. (Rom 14:1 KJV) The word 'receive' here is 'proslambano'; lambano is to get a grip on something, 'pros' is towards. Get a grip on this man towards yourself! It's a complicated Greek verb for 'hug'! If I use my doctrinal niceties to hold a man at arms' length I know nothing of Calvary love. (not Amy Carmichael in quality but certainly in sentiment!) If I practise 'guilt by association' I know nothing of Calvary love. If I wait until this person has ticked all my theological boxes I know nothing of Calvary love.

Paul uses the word twice more in Romans; Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. (Rom 14:3 KJV)

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. (Rom 15:7 KJV) What a gospel obligation is laid on us here... draw into your embrace one another as Christ. Did He use my sin as a reason to keep me at arms' length? I hadn't ticked a single box, but then Calvary love doesn't demand 'ticks in boxes'. It abides constantly, arms outspread... I wonder that you folks over there have not made more of the Emma Lazarus quotation... "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door." America's capacity for such of course is necessarily limited, but not so Christ, nor His Church if it lives in His Spirit. Only Calvary love can fulfil Emma Lazarus' promise.

I am in the middle of some personal meditations on the fellowship of the saints, perhaps I'll share some bits later. But the essence of it was captured long ago by Anthony Norris Groves; it was my sign-off for a long time here at SI what a blessing it is that the Lord's heart is so large, that He can help whenever He sees some good thing; whereas man withdraws, because he sees some evil thing, which is generally found to mean something that wounds his own self-love in the little scheme he had set up as perfection. Oh the pain our 'little schemes' must cause Him.

Re: - posted by Spitfire, on: 2005/3/3 6:08

Quote:  
-----How much more narrow would the broad road become if persecution were to come to this overindulgent side of the world? A thinning of the herd on a grand scale one would think.  
-----

Quote:  
-----We can hardly give but a nod and little of our time of prayer for those that feel persecution. We have become like spoiled little brats.  
-----

Well now, Mikey, looks like we're going to have to change your name ;-) . Let's see, what can we call you? Terminator? Just a joke, friend. You're always commenting on my spitfire.

I haven't read this entire thread, don't have that kind of time right now, but I did read down a few posts. I am feeling so overwhelmed right now by the "church hunt". My family and I attended a church in our area the past two Sundays. My husband went the first Sunday and then announced right before we left this past Sunday that he doesn't believe there is a God, so why go. I consider that progress for him. At least he is being honest with himself now. My daughter and son and I went. As I sat there, watching the show, I tried to picture myself getting involved here. I just can't see it. My thinking has changed. I have no passion for that anymore. I'm talking about the game, the show, you know, Christian City. If I tried to do it, I know I would be just going through the motions. I've lost all desire to be a part of that. It has left me feeling so lost this week. I don't know where to go or what to do. Love, Dian.

**Re: Pressing on - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/3/3 7:25**

Dear Dian,

This is what tears at the fabric...

It is why I just had to leave, couldn't do it anymore...

The thought of jumping up in the middle of the whole thing and screaming

NO!

To redundantly reiterate it is exactly (<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/singlefile.php?lid3843>) A Call to Anguish

It was the last ringing words I had listened to on the way to a prayer meeting then and nothing has since changed...

The quotes come, but more so the cry of a heart that is being shredded not by anger, but by tears.

Your words here are powerful in bringing the issue to light;

Quote:  
-----My husband went the first Sunday and then announced right before we left this past Sunday that he doesn't believe there is a God, so why go. I consider that progress for him. At least he is being honest with himself now.  
-----

And

Quote:  
-----As I sat there, watching the show  
-----

Which would likely only reinforce what may already be going on in your husband's head...

Quote:  
-----My thinking has changed. I have no passion for that anymore. I'm talking about the game, the show, you know, Christian City. If I tried to do it, I know I would be just going through the motions. I've lost all desire to be a part of that. It has left me feeling so lost this week. I don't know where to go or what to do. Love, Dian.  
-----

This is the crux of the matter and why all this harping on the church. It is to us that judgment begins in the house of the Lord. Trying to find that verse and instead came across

Zec 10:3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

Not to wrench it out of context...

But alas Dear sister!

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Gal 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will



from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Gal 6:9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Gal 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

9 and 10

9 for you and 10 for us, to intercede.

Certainly it is the Spirit who gives life and despite these things we know the Life that lives in you. Maybe this thought jotted down earlier is for you;

*The powers that be are no match for Thee.*

*They will submit and we will commit, all to You.*

Count on intercession for you, your children and for Richard. Keep pressing on and abiding in Him, nothing can thwart His purposes.

Mikey

**Re: Mercy!!, on: 2005/3/3 15:30**

Bro. Mike!!

Quote:

-----I see this church down the street lavishing their wealth on themselves, celebrating the resurrection with little love for the cross. They sing "All I want is you" and my heart burns at their musical mockery. I want to air-drop in on the stage with a 50 caliber prophecy that their praise is an offense to God's nostrils.  
-----

wheeew!

here's the line that speaks to me:

Quote:

-----Instead Jesus takes measure of me.  
-----

give us more mercy Lord! please....its so easy to speak out and against.....

Quote:

-----This claim is put to the test when I see those other living "books" Jesus is working on  
-----

lets us love ALL, as He loved ALL.

its so so hard in our natural strength, we need Jesus, Him the Comforter.

Thank You Jesus!!

**Re: - posted by Mekdi (), on: 2005/3/4 0:42**

Hi Dain

Quote

“I've lost all desire to be a part of that. It has left me feeling so lost this week.”

I just want you to go a little further and explain on this matter. I want to know what the Lord is exactly doing in us by alienating us from the present system! You Lost desire to be part of that, what is the driving force behind that? Is it because you don't see the glory “chabod” 1 Sam. 4, 21 of God as you desire it among the church or is it other personal matters? I think it will be useful to me if you share what the Spirit is working in your spirit.

By the way, I saw your post on “out of church” thread and I am really praying for you dear Dain, Take courage sister don't loose heart! God is with us!

Your sis.

Mekdes

**Re: - posted by Spitfire, on: 2005/3/4 17:04**

Quote:  
-----I just want you to go a little further and explain on this matter. I want to know what the Lord is exactly doing in us by alienating us from the present system!  
-----

Let's see? About 3 years ago, I began to read my Bible with one thing in mind: to do my best to read it as if I had never heard it before. I tried to clear my head of all the "teachings of men" which I had heard over the years and just let the word do its work on me. I was finally saved! After a lifetime of being in church, I was saved! This floored me. How could I grow up in a Christian home and go to churches my whole life and not be born again? I believe the featured sermon on this week by Duncan Campbell, Sin In The Camp, says it all. I've grown up in the age of "easy believism". I hadn't witnessed much true faith, so I didn't know I was messed up. Well, I say I didn't know, but deep down I did. I always wanted to get saved over and over again. Anytime I would hear salvation messages, it sounded so good to me. I couldn't understand why it hadn't worked for me.

So, in answer to your question, I see the church full of unbelievers who are whistling their way to hell. It's killing me! I want to scream! I want to go out into the parking lot and preach the gospel from a car hood, but they've been inoculated against the gospel. They think they already have it, and we are all crazy. I know I can't go to church with them without beginning to speak up. And I'm quite certain I will not be accepted for this. I'll just be a boat rocker.

I played the game. I climbed that ladder of "success" while my family fell apart and I used drugs everyday to numb the pain of a dead life, the whole time screaming, "Can't somebody here help me?" The church is under some kind of evil spell. It's like out of a movie, or something. It's like that movie where everyone is just acting on a set. The whole town, their whole life is just a set for a tv show. Now, I feel like I know the truth, and I'm not impressed by the scene anymore. In fact, I'm disturbed by it. I'm just literally beside myself these days. I don't know what's going to become of me, except this one thing I know: I'm going to know God if it kills me. I don't care about passing anyone else's litmus test, I just want to stand before God on judgement day and have God slap me on the tail and say, "That's my girl!" That's the reason I'm living. To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, to be conformed into his likeness. Forget the show. It ain't ever done nothin for me that was real.  
How's that for an answer? Love, Dian.

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/3/4 17:45**

Great stuff guys!

Philo wrote:

Quote:

-----Doctrinal statements were created to exclude error, but the organised church has always used them to exclude people.  
-----

Well said! Brother, why didn't you just say that earlier and spare me from typing all those wordy posts!? :-P

Quote:

-----I am in the middle of some personal meditations on the fellowship of the saints, perhaps I'll share some bits later.  
-----

Sounds like something I could really use!

Thank you Mike for this gem to Dian and myself as well:

Quote:

-----Certainly it is the Spirit who gives life and despite these things we know the Life that lives in you.  
-----

And wildman Neilgin puts a bow on the whole package!

Quote:

-----lets us love ALL, as He loved ALL.  
-----

Ain't nuffin I can add to any of this.

MC

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/4 18:02**

Quote:

-----Well said! Brother, why didn't you just say that earlier and spare me from typing all those wordy posts!?  
-----

I have yet many things to say unto you...? :-D

**Re: - posted by fouram, on: 2005/3/4 18:04**

YESSSSSSSSSS. THIS IS MY WORD, THIS IS THE WORD I'VE HELD UNTO.

To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, to be conformed into his likeness. Forget the show. It ain't ever done nothin for me that was real.

Aaaaaahhhhhhhh, I have to scream and shout!!!!

That's it...

I played the game. I climbed that ladder of "success" while my family fell apart and I used drugs everyday to numb the pain of a dead life, the whole time screaming, "Can't somebody here help "Me"

Jesus can, he help me, he helped me. When I was on drug and this and that.... he helped me. When I thought that that was what i had to do to be loved, and appreciated, valued. The devil is a liar. Jesus helped me, he helped me, he helped me.

**Re: - posted by Mekdi (), on: 2005/3/5 1:42**

Hi Dian,

Quote:

-----  
I'm not impressed by the scene anymore. In fact, I'm disturbed by it. ....To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, to be conformed into his likeness. Forget the show. It ain't ever done nothin for me that was real.

God bless you Dian, You are always open and generous in sharing, keep it up! I got all the answer now. I knew that this is going on in your spirit and I just want you to air it out so that it would add something to our already zeal kindled spirit!

God bless you

Your sis.

Mekdes

**Re: The ever quotable... - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/3/5 8:15**

Dian you are a precious sister...

Quote:

-----I began to read my Bible with one thing in mind: to do my best to read it as if I had never heard it before.  
-----

Redundant, but heard it said before that we ought to approach it with that mindset everyday.

Quote:

-----but they've been inoculated against the gospel  
-----

Quote:

-----"Can't somebody here help me?"  
-----

Quote:

-----I played the game.  
-----

Quote:

-----Now, I feel like I know the truth, and I'm not impressed by the scene anymore.  
-----

Quote:

-----I'm going to know God if it kills me.  
-----

Quote:

-----I don't care about passing anyone else's litmus test,  
-----

You already are God's girl :-)

**Re: 3 new church movements seemingly at odds - posted by andyz (), on: 2005/3/5 9:11**

I have been a pastor for about 35 years. 6 years ago i had to face up with the difference between what i was preaching and the bible. The church i was preaching was not that found in the NT.

We had the sinner's prayer - they had repentance

We have water baptism which represented an outward expression of an inward work - they made you bring forth fruit of your repentance. You had to demonstrate a death-to-self.

We had the lord's snack - they had the Lord's Supper.

We had clergy and laity - they were all brothers

We had one man speaking on Sunday - they had body ministry.

We name our various brands of institutionalism - They were on in the city with no divisions.

We have a form and programs - they had power

We have enticing words and sermons - they had life.

We call the building the church - the people were the church in the early church

The world called them Christians - the world calls us Hypocrites.

We have all kinds of Christian rock, dove awards, pulpits and pews, Madison Avenue techniques, compromise, etc.

We support division, naming His body, competition, titles, etc... You call that Christianity? That stuff isn't in the Bible... we are a cult.

How important is unity to Jesus?

How important is love to Jesus?

How important is us being in community and fellowshiping with one another?

Us having body ministry?

So what is important to us: Pastors, sermons, Sunday school, programs, supporting buildings, paying big salaries to pastors.

We are not concerned about truth. We do not fear God or truth. Read the seven letters to the 7 churches in the Book of Revelation. Where do we stand? Do you think we are going to heaven?

[www.TheRealChurch.com](http://www.TheRealChurch.com)

We need to wake up and deal with the truth or else...Â...Â...

**Re: Pastor - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/3/5 9:40**

Hi Andy,

A most sincere and warm welcome to you! Took a gander over to your site and will certainly spend some more time there digesting what is available.

Borrowed this quote from your main page, from one of our 'favorites' in these parts ('Tozerphiles' we are fond of using)

*"All of the Christians I meet who are amounting to anything for God are Christians who are very much out of key with the ir age -- very, very much out of tune with their generation."* Tozer

Very much glad to have you amongst us!

**Re: Wonderful Testimony - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/3/5 11:33**

Dear saints,

Do take a look at Andy's site.

Quite a testimony there

(<http://www.therealchurch.com/index.html>) <http://www.therealchurch.com/index.html>

Very humbling

Re:, on: 2005/3/5 15:01

Pastor Andy,

I am glad to hear that we have pastors today that are willing to "re-examine" themselves and what they are preaching from our pulpits. Thank you for challenging yourself. My hope is that you are now in a fellowship that matches more of what the 1st century church was than what you may have experienced in the past. Having come to this recent revelation, I also hope that you have seen fit to remove yourself from that "high priesthood" of American pastors and placed yourself back into the "Priesthood of all believers". If not, I can certainly understand that it may be too late in the game for you to pull out of what may indeed keep you and your family physically fed and cared for financially. Either way, the Lord is with you my brother, do not lose heart.

In regards to your assessment of the Church, I think you are correct in your observance of its condition. However, to suggest that we are a "Cult" may be a bit harsh. Out of respect for the "invisible" church that "Grows as God causes it to grow", we should refrain from such libelous accusations. I agree that many doctrinal positions, creeds, practices, and Pastors within the papal leadership of some denoms and non-denoms are indeed cult-like in appearance. Some even teach "Satan's deeper secrets" within the walls of the church.

However, I really believe that God, in his sovereignty, has proven in the past that he preserves the well being of his "invisible" body throughout the thousands of years. Through divergence, famine, sword, persecutions, reformation, and even through the Calvinism/Arminianism debate, the Lord has proven faithful to both preserve and purify his church. Not to mention that he also causes it to grow according to His will and not our own through all the centuries. Why then would it be any different today. His body is still very much alive, thriving, and growing "as God causes it to grow" even today.

I say these things to you not to become combative with your statements (I can agree with all of your observations) but rather to, in hope, disagree with your assessment of the Church's condition. I wish to project Hope and certainty on you that the church you have served these past 30+ years has not gone astray. Your brothers are still here amongst you and wanting deep fellowship with Christ alongside you.

The true Church, which only God sees, that is "hid in Christ" is also existant (in varying percentages I'm sure) within these many denoms and non-denoms that you spoke of. Perhaps they are just as dissatisfied with the direction of their churches as we who observe them are. Perhaps they have yet to be awakened from their slumber. But, nonetheless, they are there and God sees them.

I realize that perhaps my concepts here are elementary to you reflecting that which you already know but maybe you just needed to hear it again. I hope this has been a blessing and encouragement to you that your service to the body has not been in vain.

Sincerely,  
Steve  
(Picky400)

P.S. My name "Picky" is not because I'm a picky individual, but rather because I play the guitar professionally. Just thought you might like to know.