

## **The Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology?**

**ABSTRACT:** The following paper is an attempt to answer the question of the “future of Evangelical ecclesiology?” in the light of the recent movement known as “The Emerging Church”. After a brief description of what I consider to be the core concept driving the “Emergent Conversation” I suggest that the outlook for Evangelical ecclesiology if it follows this model is not positive in terms of it continuing under the name Evangelicalism. I suggest that the reason is that the Emergent Conversation, like so much of contemporary Evangelicalism has no sense of identity because it is forgetful of its Reformation heritage. I then go on to sketch out what I think Evangelical ecclesiology should do if it is going to secure a future in our culture under the name Evangelical. This includes remembering the impulses that gave rise to Evangelicalism, namely *sola Scriptura*, *sola fidei* and *solus Christus*, understood as a *theologia crucis*, and as a work of the Holy Spirit. The first two I sketch out in historical terms. In the final section I suggest a process for remembering that allows for disengagement in order to reengage, along the lines suggested by Douglas J. Hall, on the basis of a *theologia crucis*.

### **Introduction**

Does Evangelical ecclesiology have a future?

Very little sustained thought has been carried out in the name of evangelical ecclesiology in the last two decades

This paper will propose a broad historical-theological answer to the question

#### **A. The Future of Evangelical Ecclesiology: Emergent Style**

There is really only one respect, it seems, in which we might refer to the emerging church as carrying on in the Protestant tradition, namely that it is primarily characterized by protest.

One of the commonalities among the leaders of the Emergent Church is their shared experience in a very narrowly conceived, doctrinaire ecclesial experience which claims the Evangelical faith.

#### **Wither Church?: The Emergent Answer**

Leonard Sweet’s Garden variety ecclesiology

The marks of Emergent ecclesiology seems to include, according to the foregoing analysis, doctrinal heterogeneity, evolutionary narrativity, non-confessional-non-belonging-belonging and methodological non-specificity.

Yet, it is fascinating to see how much the Emergent conversational church is already taking on the hue of the park.

## **B. The Church's Ministry is Proclamation: Toward a Reformed Ecclesiology**

The Reformed understanding of sola Scriptura

The Reformation Understanding of *sola fidei*

The Reformation Understanding of the Holy Spirit

## **C. Towards a Christological Ecclesiology in the current context**

The Church is the organ of the ministry of God's Word in and through God's power (the Holy Spirit)

"Ecclesia Crusis: The Theologic of Christian Awkwardness".

***I. Disengagement is a Theological Imperative and Task***

***II. The Ancient Dialectic: Not "of" yet "in"***

***III. Reengagement of the 'World Quests' with the Christian Gospel***

- a) *The desire for moral authenticity*
- b) *The quest for meaningful community.*
- c) *The quest for mystery and transcendence*
- d) *The quest for meaning*