
Subject: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [Mark L](#) on Sun, 20 Jun 2010 19:36:52 GMT
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I ran across this and thought I'd post it here. I don't agree with everything he says but all I could think of in reading it was 11 Thess. 2/3 That day shall not come unless the great falling away comes first

The Coming Evangelical Collapse
By Michael Spencer, Posted March 20, 2009.

A "post evangelical" predicts the coming of an anti-Christian era that will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment.

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Editor's note: Over the years, we've run dozens of pieces dissecting the influence of the evangelical Christian movement on American political culture. Most have been critical of its influence -- its leaders' desire to destroy the wall between church and state and turn the U.S. into a "Christian state" -- and virtually all have been written by analysts outside the movement. The piece that follows is a departure. Written by Michael Spencer, who describes himself as "a post evangelical reformation Christian in search of a Jesus-shaped spirituality," this essay, which was adapted from a series on his blog, InternetMonk.com, is from the perspective of an insider, a "true believer." We hope you'll find Spencer's take informative.

We are on the verge -- within 10 years -- of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity. This breakdown will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and it will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West.

Within two generations, evangelicalism will be a house deserted of half its occupants. (Between 25 and 35 percent of Americans today are Evangelicals.) In the "Protestant" 20th century, Evangelicals flourished. But they will soon be living in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st century.

This collapse will herald the arrival of an anti-Christian chapter of the post-Christian West.

Intolerance of Christianity will rise to levels many of us have not believed possible in our lifetimes, and public policy will become hostile toward evangelical Christianity, seeing it as the opponent of the common good.

Millions of Evangelicals will quit. Thousands of ministries will end. Christian media will be reduced, if not eliminated. Many Christian schools will go into rapid decline. I'm convinced the grace and mission of God will reach to the ends of the earth. But the end of evangelicalism as we know it is close.

Why is this going to happen?

1. Evangelicals have identified their movement with the culture war and with political conservatism. This will prove to be a very costly mistake. Evangelicals will increasingly be seen as a threat to cultural progress. Public leaders will consider us bad for America, bad for education,

bad for children, and bad for society.

The evangelical investment in moral, social, and political issues has depleted our resources and exposed our weaknesses. Being against gay marriage and being rhetorically pro-life will not make up for the fact that massive majorities of Evangelicals can't articulate the Gospel with any coherence. We fell for the trap of believing in a cause more than a faith.

2. We Evangelicals have failed to pass on to our young people an orthodox form of faith that can take root and survive the secular onslaught. Ironically, the billions of dollars we've spent on youth ministers, Christian music, publishing, and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they feel about it. Our young people have deep beliefs about the culture war, but do not know why they should obey scripture, the essentials of theology, or the experience of spiritual discipline and community. Coming generations of Christians are going to be monumentally ignorant and unprepared for culture-wide pressures.

3. There are three kinds of evangelical churches today: consumer-driven megachurches, dying churches, and new churches whose future is fragile. Denominations will shrink, even vanish, while fewer and fewer evangelical churches will survive and thrive.

4. Despite some very successful developments in the past 25 years, Christian education has not produced a product that can withstand the rising tide of secularism. Evangelicalism has used its educational system primarily to staff its own needs and talk to itself.

5. The confrontation between cultural secularism and the faith at the core of evangelical efforts to "do good" is rapidly approaching. We will soon see that the good Evangelicals want to do will be viewed as bad by so many, and much of that work will not be done. Look for ministries to take on a less and less distinctively Christian face in order to survive.

6. Even in areas where Evangelicals imagine themselves strong (like the Bible Belt), we will find a great inability to pass on to our children a vital evangelical confidence in the Bible and the importance of the faith.

7. The money will dry up.

What will be left?

â€¢ Expect evangelicalism to look more like the pragmatic, therapeutic, church-growth oriented megachurches that have defined success. Emphasis will shift from doctrine to relevance, motivation, and personal success -- resulting in churches further compromised and weakened in their ability to pass on the faith.

â€¢ Two of the beneficiaries will be the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions. Evangelicals have been entering these churches in recent decades and that trend will continue, with more efforts aimed at the "conversion" of Evangelicals to the Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

â€¢ A small band will work hard to rescue the movement from its demise through theological renewal. This is an attractive, innovative, and tireless community with outstanding media, publishing, and leadership development. Nonetheless, I believe the coming evangelical collapse will not result in a second reformation, though it may result in benefits for many churches and the beginnings of new churches.

â€¢ The emerging church will largely vanish from the evangelical landscape, becoming part of the small segment of progressive mainline Protestants that remain true to the liberal vision.

â€¢ Aggressively evangelistic fundamentalist churches will begin to disappear.

â€¢ Charismatic-Pentecostal Christianity will become the majority report in evangelicalism. Can this community withstand heresy, relativism, and confusion? To do so, it must make a priority of biblical authority, responsible leadership, and a reemergence of orthodoxy.

â€¢ Evangelicalism needs a "rescue mission" from the world Christian community. It is time for missionaries to come to America from Asia and Africa. Will they come? Will they be able to bring to our culture a more vital form of Christianity?

â€¢ Expect a fragmented response to the culture war. Some Evangelicals will work to create their own countercultures, rather than try to change the culture at large. Some will continue to see conservatism and Christianity through one lens and will engage the culture war much as before -- a status quo the media will be all too happy to perpetuate. A significant number, however, may give up political engagement for a discipleship of deeper impact.
Is all of this a bad thing?

Evangelicalism doesn't need a bailout. Much of it needs a funeral. But what about what remains? Is it a good thing that denominations are going to become largely irrelevant? Only if the networks that replace them are able to marshal resources, training, and vision to the mission field and into the planting and equipping of churches.

Is it a good thing that many marginal believers will depart? Possibly, if churches begin and continue the work of renewing serious church membership. We must change the conversation from the maintenance of traditional churches to developing new and culturally appropriate ones. The ascendancy of Charismatic-Pentecostal-influenced worship around the world can be a major positive for the evangelical movement if reformation can reach those churches and if it is joined with the calling, training, and mentoring of leaders. If American churches come under more of the influence of the movement of the Holy Spirit in Africa and Asia, this will be a good thing.

Will the evangelicalizing of Catholic and Orthodox communions be a good development? One can hope for greater unity and appreciation, but the history of these developments seems to be much more about a renewed vigor to "evangelize" Protestantism in the name of unity.

Will the coming collapse get Evangelicals past the pragmatism and shallowness that has brought about the loss of substance and power? Probably not. The purveyors of the evangelical circus will be in fine form, selling their wares as the promised solution to every church's problems. I expect the landscape of mega church vacuity to be around for a very long time.

Will it shake lose the prosperity Gospel from its parasitical place on the evangelical body of Christ? Evidence from similar periods is not encouraging. American Christians seldom seem to be able to separate their theology from an overall idea of personal affluence and success.

The loss of their political clout may impel many Evangelicals to reconsider the wisdom of trying to create a "godly society." That doesn't mean they'll focus solely on saving souls, but the increasing concern will be how to keep secularism out of church, not stop it altogether. The integrity of the church as a counter cultural movement with a message of "empire subversion" will increasingly replace a message of cultural and political entitlement.

Despite all of these challenges, it is impossible not to be hopeful. As one commenter has already said, "Christianity loves a crumbling empire."

We can rejoice that in the ruins, new forms of Christian vitality and ministry will be born. I expect

to see a vital and growing house church movement. This cannot help but be good for an evangelicalism that has made buildings, numbers, and paid staff its drugs for half a century. We need new evangelicalism that learns from the past and listens more carefully to what God says about being His people in the midst of a powerful, idolatrous culture.

I'm not a prophet. My view of evangelicalism is not authoritative or infallible. I am certainly wrong in some of these predictions. But is there anyone who is observing evangelicalism in these times who does not sense that the future of our movement holds many dangers and much potential?

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [james](#) on Mon, 21 Jun 2010 02:01:21 GMT
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Hardbones wrote on Sun, 20 June 2010 14:36

1. The evangelical investment in moral, social, and political issues has depleted our resources and exposed our weaknesses. Being against gay marriage and being rhetorically pro-life will not make up for the fact that massive majorities of Evangelicals can't articulate the Gospel with any coherence. We fell for the trap of believing in a cause more than a faith.

2. We Evangelicals have failed to pass on to our young people an orthodox form of faith that can take root and survive the secular onslaught. Ironically, the billions of dollars we've spent on youth ministers, Christian music, publishing, and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they feel about it. Our young people have deep beliefs about the culture war, but do not know why they should obey scripture, the essentials of theology, or the experience of spiritual discipline and community. Coming generations of Christians are going to be monumentally ignorant and unprepared for culture-wide pressures.

Hummm, some wise observations and strong predictions by Mr. Spencer...This was written over a year ago, but time will tell to what extreme this plays out. I believe he's spot on as to the observation concerning the church today being caught up in social activism, programs, and moral issues and yet unable (for the most part) to coherently explain The Gospel of Jesus Christ or make disciples.

And the youth of today? No moral compass, watered down beliefs, no grounding in The Word, an exact reflection of the world in every aspect of life. Faith? It's just a religious word generically used to describe ones political position; nothing to do with complete obedience and trust in Jesus in day to day life.

I personally believe the great falling away has already begun, even though the church buildings still are filled with people. Maybe not to the extent that it will happen in the future, but as the scripture says in Isaiah 29 and verse 13 "...Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their

mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me..."

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [sparkles](#) on Mon, 21 Jun 2010 20:47:06 GMT
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Very interesting article, thanks for sharing Mark.

Quote:Expect evangelicalism to look more like the pragmatic, therapeutic, church-growth oriented megachurches that have defined success. Emphasis will shift from doctrine to relevance, motivation, and personal success -- resulting in churches further compromised and weakened in their ability to pass on the faith.

I believe we have been seeing this happen more and more with the inner healing, and theophostic healing being promoted in churches. Then we also have Yoga to relieve stress in ones life, and karate to learn discipline, and personal words of prophecy to guide people, and the seed faith movement so one can prosper and get rich(at least that is what the false ministers tell their listeners all the way to the bank.) We see people caught in adulterous relationships, and sodomite relationships being back in ministry after a very short time away. Seems like holiness is a thing of the past in many churches. We have seen people follow the laughing movement, the Airport Vineyard group, Todd Bentley, Pensacola, and many others just so they could feel good and "fall out under the power."

Seems like the churches have nothing much to offer except a phone number to a psychiatrist or psychologist to help members in their congregation.

Quote:Will the evangelicalizing of Catholic and Orthodox communions be a good development? One can hope for greater unity and appreciation, but the history of these developments seems to be much more about a renewed vigor to "evangelize" Protestantism in the name of unity.

Unity with the Catholic Church? NO WAY! We do not have fellowship with those who promote heretical doctrines. When a religious group promotes such things as prayers to Mary, the Eucharist where the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, baptismal regeneration, who has murdered an untold number of christians over the ages and even today in other countries, who pray to saints, who forbid to marry, and forbid the eating of meat on Fridays during lent, who bow down and worship the pope and call him Holy Father, and many other deceptions, heresies and errors: have unity with these people? No, not with the Catholic Church, which really says unless you are Catholic you will not be saved anyways.

Yes, the persecution will increase for the christian, and some of those who persecute will have come out of our very midst. They will deliver us up to be put to death if possible. This is a relative

time of peace for those who are christians in the United States, a time to prepare and get ready for what is ahead. To pray for those in other countries who are already suffering untold tortures and persecutions just because they name the name of Jesus Christ. It is a blessing to be a christian, but also a big responsibility. May the Lord help us to be that light on a hill, and not hid our light under a barrel.

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [Mark L](#) on Wed, 23 Jun 2010 21:56:01 GMT
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I thought it was nice that someone other than "us" could see something like this.

"Evangelicals have identified their movement with the culture war and with political conservatism"

That comment really stuck out to me.

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [james](#) on Wed, 23 Jun 2010 23:34:13 GMT
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Hardbones wrote on Wed, 23 June 2010 16:56

"Evangelicals have identified their movement with the culture war and with political conservatism"

That comment really stuck out to me.

That seems to be where many christians are today, it's as if 'political conservatism' takes precedence over ALL the teachings of Jesus. We see people getting involved in the political process after many years of following the teachings of The Bible...not only becoming involved in the voting process, but insisting that others do so as well. So what has happened? I'd say that the culture and political system has swayed many from the foundation which was laid. So many christians display such pride in their political affiliations, and put forth far more effort and time into it than spiritual matters.

I find it amazing that one would run a race that takes a lifetime, and as the finish line comes into sight, veer off course due to peer pressure from the world and it's system...which we know to be Satan.

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [GWB](#) on Thu, 24 Jun 2010 02:15:33 GMT
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I was listening to an Evangelical Christian radio show today. This was the question of the day on a very popular talk show:

Is prayer or man's intellect more effective?

Are you really kidding me? I was embarrassed for the church of today.

Uhhhh....OK.....Is the hand of God more effective compared to a pea brain that He created in the first place?

Is it me...or am I missing something here?

I don't want to sound haughty. I just praise His Name for good, solid teaching.

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [james](#) on Thu, 24 Jun 2010 02:23:08 GMT
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GWB wrote on Wed, 23 June 2010 21:15I don't want to sound haughty. I just praise His Name for good, solid teaching.

Amen and Amen...Thank you Jesus...Thank You, Thank You, Thank You.

Subject: Re: The Coming Evangelical Collapse
Posted by [GWB](#) on Thu, 24 Jun 2010 02:41:26 GMT
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