Faithful Reformation: the Importance of Apostolicity and Consensual Orthodoxy for Emerging Christian Expressions

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Abstract:
In this study, we have considered if, how, or to what extent emerging Christian expressions within the context of the Emerging Church (EC) movement, and related Emerging Missional partners and postcedents, might reform, contextualize, innovate, or revise Christian forms, language, practices, or doctrines to reform the church and inculturate the gospel in postmodern contexts, while retaining continuity and congruence with apostolicity and orthodoxy. We also wished to see if, how, or to what extent EC voices considered accountability to apostolicity and orthodoxy and, if not, to what they were accountable and also to what extent they remain authentically Christian. We have done so by examining the perspectives of leading EC authors, practitioners, and current and historical conversation partners including Vincent of Lérins and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, using historical, theological, ethnographic and narrative inquiry and analysis methods. Our review of literature from EC authors provides insights into debates that led to fracturing of the EC movement and that offer challenges to orthodoxy. Our analysis also reveals methods EC authors appealed to in order to justify their views, or defense or revisions of core historic doctrines. When they rarely appealed to orthodoxy, there were two common but divergent approaches in which orthodoxy was either viewed as a system of beliefs, in which one could treat orthodox doctrines trans-subjectively, or else as being subjectively grounded in the incarnate Christ, in which accountability to Christ was primarily evidenced in materialist acts. We also placed our analysis of key EC sources and their approaches to apostolicity and orthodoxy in conversation with the historical perspectives of Vincent of Lérins and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as well as with current EC practitioners, via an ethnographic questionnaire. We found that Vincent's method of consensual orthodoxy, instead of seeing orthodoxy as a system of universal beliefs, or as entirely subjective, appeared to center orthodoxy in the unified life of the Body of Christ in which doctrine may grow and, yet, its apostolic meaning is safeguarded by requiring Christians to surrender current interpretations of Scripture to the universal ecumenical consensus of the Body of Christ through history. Then too, our review of Bonhoeffer's works reveals the ways that he provides room for questioning and flexibility, while holding that the creedal beliefs and sacred practices of the apostolic faith must be surrendered to as-is, as agents of revelation. In further analysis of primary sources and ethnographic responses, the study also reveals a third EC approach to apostolicity and orthodoxy, in which, in sympathy with Vincent and Bonhoeffer, orthodox doctrine is seen as the unified faith, obedience, worship, and witness of the Body of Christ, and in which body doctrine may contextually grow in faithful alignment with apostolicity. Additionally, we considered Vincent's method as providing orthodox EC voices a rule to guide contextual listening, inculturation and growth of doctrine while ensuring continuity and congruity with apostolicity.

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Faithful Reformation: the Importance of Apostolicity and Consensual Orthodoxy for Emerging Christian Expressions. Sharpe, Jonathan (University of Pretoria, 2018). In this study, we have considered if, how, or to what extent emerging Christian expressions within the context of the Emerging Church (EC) movement, and related Emerging Missional partners and postcedents, might reform, The identity of Bernard Mzeki from the formative history of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe (1890-2013): retracing his life, martyrdom and influence. Chawarika, John (University of Pretoria, 2018). The inten Postmodern Christian liberalism comfortably affirms the creed while often disputing that apostolic theology is accompanied by binding apostolic morals and behavior, centered on a particular view of the human person and human body. Ironically, the old Protestant liberalism retained much of Christian morality even while emasculating the supportive theological architecture. God and the heavenly host must laugh at this ongoing game of rotating chairs among reputedly earthly saints. Protestant reformers and most of their descendants, with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, have agreed the chu... 7 Responses to Jen Hatmaker, LGBTQ & Apostolicity. Eternity Matters says: May 9, 2017 at 8:53 am. The relationship between Scripture, the Gospel and Orthodoxy is a huge topic, but is indisputably important. The classic criteria for determining canonicity (apostolicity, antiquity, conformity with the Church's teaching etc) are all, ultimately, as ineffectual as the criteria for "orthodoxy" discussed above. The importance of this written reference (it is repeated twice) is such that the phrase is preserved in later Creeds; we still confess that Christ died and rose according to the (same) Scriptures. What is important here is that the point of concern in this basic Christian confession is not the historicity of the events behind their reports, but that the reports are continuous with, in accordance with, Scripture; it is a textual, or more accurately an "intertextual" or interpretative confession.