

AlbertMohler.com

Evangelical — What's in the Name?

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

I have written a great deal on the issue of evangelical definition — an issue that will not go away any time soon. Michael Luo of *The New York Times* offered an overview of the question in Sunday's edition of the paper. I was glad to talk to Mr. Luo and I appreciate his effort to understand evangelicals and the nature of evangelical identity.

The most interesting section of the article deals with the “emerging church” as a movement:

Although much of the attention on the emerging church movement has been on changes that its leaders have made in worship — bringing back liturgy and ancient practices like meditation and chanting — the movement has also sought to introduce theological innovations.

It emphasizes reading the Bible as a narrative, perfect in its purposes but not necessarily inerrant; de-emphasizing individual salvation in favor of a more holistic mission in serving the world; even making evangelicals less absolutist on whether people from other religions might find their way to heaven.

All of this has made many evangelical leaders nervous. They worry that the “emerging church” will water down the theology.

“It's over the question of the nature of truth,” said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., whose appointment in 1993 helped seal what many critics saw as a conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention, evangelicalism's largest denomination.

But Brian D. McLaren, founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church outside of Baltimore and a chief apostle of the emerging church, argues that he is not promoting relativism; rather, he believes the evangelical movement has been hijacked theologically, as well as politically, by its more fundamentalist elements, something he is trying to correct. “In many, many areas, I'm looking at polarization,” he said, “and I'm looking at a third way.”

A third way between what? It is intellectually dishonest to suggest that those who stand in continuity with the founders of evangelicalism have “hijacked” the evangelical movement.

I discussed this issue on Monday's edition of *The Albert Mohler Program* [[listen here](#)].

Content Copyright © 2002-2010, R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

