

Calvary Chapel Termination Has Profound Implications

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Lighthouse Trails regrets to report that on May 5th, Paul Smith, brother of Chuck Smith (the founder of the Calvary Chapel movement), was fired from his position in the Calvary Chapel (CCOF) organization during an unscheduled meeting that day. The motion to fire Paul Smith was made by board member Roger Wing and seconded by Chuck Smith's son-in-law, Brian Broderson. Other board members affirmed the motion, and Paul Smith was dismissed.

For some time now Paul Smith, who has been in full-time ministry since 1951, has been putting forth tireless efforts to help keep contemplative and emerging spirituality out of the Calvary Chapel movement. At times, this caused conflict with other Calvary Chapel figures who did not resonate with these efforts. This Lighthouse Trails report is being presented because of recent statements such as the following that give a biased view of Paul Smith's role at Calvary Chapel:

Smith's desire to codify and enforce not only the "Distinctives," but positions on such matters as "The Shack" and secondary doctrinal issues was at odds with other people in leadership and that eventually cost him his job. Smith was working out of a deep desire to see his brothers legacy remain intact and define what was and wasn't "Calvary Chapel." While I think his motives were pure they also brought a sense of restriction and censorship to many in the movement. (from a Reformed/Calvinist pastor, formerly a Calvary Chapel pastor, who runs a blog called Phoenix Preacher)
Comments made on that site suggesting that Paul Smith's firing was warranted have prompted this Lighthouse Trails report. This is the story behind the story.



On May 2nd of 2006, Lighthouse Trails was contacted by someone who wishes to remain anonymous who explained that a book written by Chuck Smith Senior contained quotes by and references to contemplative and emerging figures. In our efforts to expose the contemplative/emerging movement, Lighthouse Trails reviewed the book then issued an article titled, "[What Happened to the Calvary Chapel Book, When Storms Come?.](#)" The article stated that Chuck Smith's book *When Storms Come* contained quotes by and references to contemplative Catholic mystic Anthony DeMello, for one. DeMello is discussed in Ray Yungen's book, *A Time of Departing*. De Mello wrote the contemplative classic called *Sadhana: A Way to God* and in that book he says:

To silence the mind is an extremely difficult task. How hard it is to keep the mind from thinking, thinking, thinking, forever thinking, forever producing thoughts in a never-

ending stream. Our Hindu masters in India have a saying: one thorn is removed by another. By this they mean that you will be wise to use one thought to rid yourself of all the other thoughts that crowd into your mind. One thought, one image, one phrase or sentence or word that your mind can be made to fasten on. (*A Time of Departing*, p. 75). Prior to this first article, Lighthouse Trails had begun a working relationship with Roger Oakland who had been involved with the Calvary Chapel movement (teaching and evangelizing) for about twenty five years. We were in the early stages of contracting with Roger Oakland for a book on the emerging church.

On May 18th, Chuck Smith emailed Lighthouse Trails and stated:

[I have] prepared a position paper to be distributed to the Calvary Chapel pastors on the subject of the Emergent Church and its many divergent and unscriptural theological positions that trouble me greatly.

Chuck Smith also thanked Lighthouse Trails for sending him a copy of *A Time of Departing*, which he said he "read with interest," then added "[[A Time of Departing](#)] resonates with the concerns that I personally have concerning the direction that many ministries seem to be taking in their endeavor to unify all faiths. I do believe that straight is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and as Jesus said, He is that way, He is the truth, and the life, and no man can come to the Father but by Him."

Three days later, we reported that Calvary Chapel released [a Position Paper](#), denouncing mystical practices (i.e., contemplative prayer) and the emerging church. A [second Lighthouse Trails article](#) discussed this move initiated by Chuck Smith Sr:

This weekend, a position paper addressed to pastors was posted on the Calvary Chapel website. The paper indicates that Calvary Chapel is taking a stand against contemplative spirituality and the emerging church and decrees that the title Calvary Chapel not be attached to such movements.

In the Position Paper, Calvary Chapel pastors were told not to use the Calvary Chapel title on their church name if they were going to go in the contemplative/emerging direction. On May 25, 2006, Lighthouse Trails released a follow-up article titled, ["Calvary Chapel May Face Challenge in Upholding Position Paper"](#). In the article, we quoted Roger Oakland regarding the Position Paper:

Calvary Chapel is at a critical point in the history of the movement. If clear correction is made, then the movement will go on and become a lighthouse in these last days. If nothing more happens than a written statement, and pastors and churches are permitted to carry the name Calvary Chapel but embrace contemplative, purpose driven, seeker friendly market driven ideas, the movement will break into various segments. There are many Calvary Chapel pastors who are asking for this kind of clear cut direction and want Calvary Chapel to remain what it once was.

On June 3, 2006, in our article titled, ["Calvary Chapel May Set Precedent at This Week's Pastors Conference"](#), we reported that Chuck Smith Jr, then pastor of Calvary Chapel Capo Beach, was officially no longer part of the Calvary Chapel movement because of his contemplative/emerging affinities. It appeared that Calvary Chapel was going to stand strong on their commitment to maintain biblical integrity, even though this was a very painful situation for family members. At that time, Paul Smith expressed his deep sadness

at his nephew's decision to embrace contemplative/emerging spirituality. Our article also stated:

Calvary Chapel may be the first large ministry that has been directly influenced to actually denounce the false teachings of these movements. If Calvary Chapel stands firm on defending the gospel message and rejecting these heretical doctrines, it may be setting a precedent for other Christian ministries to do likewise. With organizations such as Purpose Driven, Zondervan, NavPress publishers, Willow Creek and Renovare all promoting contemplative spirituality and with many other ministries appearing to head that way, it is becoming less and less popular to do what Calvary Chapel has done. But it is a time in history when compromising the integrity of the gospel could actually help to unfold the greatest spiritual deception Christianity has ever seen.

Then on June 16, 2006, we issued a short notice titled "[Calvary Chapel Rejects Purpose Driven and Emerging Spirituality](#)". In an unexpected move, Calvary Chapel came out publicly against the Purpose Driven movement. Our posting stated:

This week a notice was placed on the Calvary Chapel Distribution website recalling Chuck Smith Sr's book, *When Storms Come* (which had been tampered with). The notice (no longer online) also stated: "The teaching and positions of Rick Warren have come into conflict with us at Calvary Chapel. Pastor Chuck has directed us to discontinue this product effective immediately."

Shortly thereafter, Calvary Distribution (the resource arm of Calvary Chapel) removed all Purpose Driven materials from their resource database. In the meantime, Roger Oakland was beginning to receive increased criticism for his stand against Purpose Driven and the emerging church. In a July 2006 article, he explained some of his concerns in an article titled, "[Calvary Chapel and Purpose Driven](#)". He told what he believed to be the main reasons why Calvary Chapel and Purpose Driven do not resonate with each other: Why did Calvary Distribution remove Rick Warren's Purpose Driven books and related materials from their distribution? I believe these four reasons I have discussed are reasonable and a valid answer to that question:

Differences in Eschatology

Differences with regard to the Emerging Church

Differences with regard to contemplative prayer and mysticism

Differences with regard to church growth principles and beliefs.

Christianity has always been made up of strong leaders who take different positions. In this case, we see two well-known contemporary leaders going in two different directions. I also know that many Calvary Chapel pastors approved the decision and applauded Calvary Distribution when the Rick Warren materials were no longer being distributed.

Because there are some Calvary pastors who strongly disagree with this decision, it is very possible that in the future there will be a split of the Calvary Chapel movement. The pressures on young pastors today to conform to the current trends for the sake of having a successful big church are ever increasing.

Over the next several months, Roger Oakland wrote [*Faith Undone: the emerging church-a new reformation or an end-time deception*](#). The book was released in the summer of 2007 and documents many irrefutable connections between some of today's most popular and influential proclaiming-Christian leaders: Rick Warren, Brian McLaren, Bob Buford, Peter Drucker, Richard Foster, Bill Hybels, Leith Anderson, and others. It also reveals the financial backing that was behind the birth of the current emerging church movement, showing that the movement wasn't just the "discontent grumblings of young people looking for answers" (back cover) but entailed a far more structured effort to bring about a new mystical spirituality that would ultimately reject the very core of the Bible's main tenets. Because the book connected dots between the emerging church and highly regarded leaders, needless to say it rocked the boat.

Over the next few months after *Faith Undone* was released, Roger Oakland spoke in different locations around the world, warning believers about the new spirituality that had entered the Christian church. Then two days after he posted an article called [Icabod](#), Roger was promptly removed from Calvary Chapel's radio network/station, KWVE. In [our article](#) "Roger Oakland Removed from Calvary Chapel Radio", we stated: Lighthouse Trails contacted KWVE on November 19th [2007] to confirm the removal [of Roger Oakland] and to find out the reason this took place. Richard McIntosh, KWVE station manager, confirmed the removal and told Lighthouse Trails that while he knew the reason, he would not comment. During this time period, Roger Oakland and Lighthouse Trails were receiving angry and threatening phone calls and emails by unidentified persons. Nevertheless, we knew we must stay the course.

While the long-time relationship between Roger Oakland and Calvary Chapel became highly strained, in a meeting between Roger Oakland and Chuck Smith, Pastor Smith affirmed his support of Roger Oakland and his ministry. It should be noted too that on a number of occasions, Chuck Smith has expressed his support for the work at Lighthouse Trails. And to our knowledge, he has never reneged on his original statements to keep contemplative/emergent/Purpose Driven out of the Calvary Chapel movement. In fact, Chuck Smith invited former New Age follower-turned-Christian Warren Smith to speak at the 2008 Calvary Chapel Senior Pastors Conference in Murrieta, California. [Warren Smith](#) delivered a powerful exhortation to pastors on June 5th, 2008, encouraging Calvary Chapel pastors to stand during these times of great spiritual deception that the Bible warns will take place in the last days.¹ A large number of the 800 pastors in attendance gave Warren Smith a standing ovation, indicating that *many* Calvary Chapel pastors resonate with Warren Smith's message, which is the same message as Roger Oakland, Ray Yungen, and Lighthouse Trails.

But as with most denominations and Christian organizations, there are indications that contemplative/emergent/Purpose Driven is continuing to influence the Calvary Chapel movement contrary to the efforts and statements of Chuck Smith in 2006. For instance, Calvary Chapel speaker Gayle Erwin has come out strong in support of the New Age sympathizing book, *The Shack*. Erwin's endorsement for William Paul Young's *New York Times* best-seller sits on *The Shack* website, and says:

Riveting, with twists that defy your expectations while *teaching powerful theological lessons* without patronizing. I was crying by page 100. You cannot read it without your heart becoming involved. [emphasis added]

Even though a statement was issued by Calvary Chapel denouncing *The Shack*, which is reported in our article ["New Age Similarities, Popularity Continues, and Calvary Chapel Gives Official Statement"](#), Gayle Erwin continues speaking at Calvary Chapel churches today.

In the summer of 2008, Lighthouse Trails issued a controversial article titled, ["Greg Laurie Connects Purpose Driven to a Move of God - Gives Financial Support"](#). Laurie, one of the most popular Calvary Chapel pastors had given financial support to Rick Warren's New York crusade, and at the same time, called the Purpose Driven movement a move of God. This was disheartening for those who hoped that Calvary Chapel was truly going to stand strong against the heretical teachings of the day. Later, Greg Laurie's ministry issued a statement denying that they had financially supported the crusade, but Lighthouse Trails spoke with crusade organizers who had not only placed the information on their website but confirmed it to us over the phone. In September 2008, we issued a follow-up report: [Warren, Blanchard, Hybels, Laurie, Buford - Launching New York Leadership Center](#).

Concerns over the direction that the Calvary Chapel movement may go after Chuck Smith is no longer heading the organization have continued to grow. And now with Paul Smith, who strongly advocated and supported his brother's hopes of having a NON-contemplative/emerging/Purpose Driven movement, those concerns are mounting. Just two weeks ago, Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa (home church of Chuck Smith Sr.) hosted a [Pure Worship Conference](#), which included worship leaders from the nearby Rock Harbor church. Rock Harbor has shown signs that it is being significantly influenced by the emerging church, including having had their youth group study New Age sympathizer [Rob Bell's book, Velvet Elvis](#), for three weeks. A few months ago, Rock Harbor held a meeting due to concerns by congregants as to whether they were going emergent or not. Approximately 700 people showed up!

A second event is scheduled between Rock Harbor and Calvary Chapel at the end of May, [Movement 2009](#). The conference will take place at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa and will feature Rock Harbor's teaching pastor Mike Erre and worship team. Mike Erre is the author of a new book, [Death by Church: Rescuing Jesus from His Followers; Recapturing God's Hope for His People](#). The book is filled with [kingdom-now theology](#) and numerous favorable references to and quotes by people like Brian McLaren, Dallas Willard, and other contemplative, emerging figures. Based on this book alone, it is accurate to say that Erre has all the earmarks of an emerging church pastor. In Erre's 2008 book, *Why Guys Need God*, there he quotes and references a number of contemplative mystic-proponents: Richard Rohr, Larry Crabb, Pete Scazzero, Rob Bell, and others. It is very clear by Erre's remarks about Richard Rohr (whom he references over a half a dozen times in the book) that he esteems him highly. And yet Rohr's spirituality would be in the same camp as someone like Matthew Fox (author of *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*) who believes in pantheism and panentheism. Rohr wrote the foreword to a 2007 book

called *How Big is Your God?* by Jesuit priest (from India) Paul Coutinho. In Coutinho's book, he describes an interspiritual community where people of all religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity) worship the same God. How ironic that Paul Smith's firing is sandwiched between two Rock Harbor events at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. Members at that church should be very, very concerned.

Recently we reported on Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa's high school in which a teacher there asked his class to read, review, and study *How to Stay Christian in College* written by Protestant-turned-Catholic J. Budziszewski . The book has references in the back of some editions to mystic emergent Tony Jones, and Budziszewski himself is a proponent of contemplative prayer practices. Our article "[Concerned Family Asks Legitimate Questions of Christian Leaders](#)" illustrates what many families are going through in trying to protect their children and teens from spiritual deception. Christian parents must realize that the souls of their youth are at stake.

Paul Smith came on board to Calvary Chapel about four years ago to help with what could possibly be a sinking ship. Paul believed that the only answer for the movement was to hold to the basic tenets of biblical Christianity. As he learned of the various emerging/contemplative/Purpose Driven influences pouring into Calvary Chapel, he often spoke up but was also often received with resistance--until last Tuesday, when an impromptu meeting in the middle of the day brought his efforts to a halt.

When we spoke with Paul Smith this week, he was packing his things, preparing to leave Calvary Chapel. At approximately 80 years old, his mind sharp and his focus straightforward, Paul isn't sure where he will go from here. He isn't sure of the future of Calvary Chapel anymore either. But he is sure of this - the One whom He seeks to serve is faithful and will in these last days draw a line in the sand and ask every true believer to step on the side of biblical truth. Paul sent us an email a few days after his dismissal. We asked him if we could post part of it, and he agreed:

I have enjoyed serving our Calvary Chapel pastors through Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship. Calvary Chapel is a wonderful and surprising work of God. It has been used by God to hold fast to simply teaching the Word of God, book-by-book and verse-by-verse, the whole counsel of God.... It is my prayer that we hold fast to the sufficiency of the Word of God and the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit to guide this blessed ministry of God. My heart's desire is to follow the way of my Lord Jesus Christ. I like what the prophet Isaiah and David have to say about the true Judge who would come and dwell among us and His method and His heart in righteous judgment.

Isa 11:1-5: And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD ; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

This situation with Calvary Chapel is not isolated. Nearly every evangelical denomination and organization of any size in North America is going in this same direction to one degree or another. One key factor in why this is happening so rapidly is that Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries are heavily saturated with contemplative/emerging spirituality. [Biola University](#), for instance, where many Calvary Chapel pastors have attended and graduated, is deeply involved in this "new spirituality."

The spirituality of the desert fathers has gotten a grip on the current theological thought and practice like no one could have predicted just a few years ago, thanks largely in part to the emerging church and the work of Rick Warren and Bill Hybels. Remember, mysticism is what gives the emerging church its momentum. Holistic doctor and author [Dr. Rick Levy revealed](#) that in 2008 17 million Americans were practicing meditation (eastern-style). That number is up from 10 million in 2003. At that rate, in another five years it will probably be somewhere between 20 and 25 million. There is no doubt that this surge of mysticism will have a profound effect on virtually every North American family. This statistic is sobering when you consider what Richard Kirby observed: The meditation of advanced occultists is identical with the prayer of advanced mystics; it is no accident that both traditions use the same word for the highest reaches of their respective activities: contemplation. (*Mission of Mysticism*, p. 7)

Our prayer at Lighthouse Trails is that everyone involved in this issue would take that statement seriously. Mysticism (i.e., the occult) is overtaking all segments of society, and this means that the world is falling under the spell of sorceries (magical arts) that according to the book of Revelation will deceive all nations (Revelation 18:23).

We close with this: In [Alan Jones' book, *Reimagining Christianity*](#), he talks about a mystical spirituality in which not only all the world's religions will be united but all humanity will be united whether religious or not. On the back cover of Jones' book, Brian McLaren claims that this view "stimulates" and "encourages" him "deeply" and that Christianity is moving away from "dogma" (doctrine) toward "authentic spirituality" (mysticism).

With the termination of Paul Smith and the embracing of and teaming up with an emerging church, is this "authentic spirituality" the direction that Calvary Chapel is going to go? The answer to that question is becoming clearer all the time.

Related:

["Brian McLaren's Hope for the Future - The Minds of Your Grandchildren"](#)

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