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So, I start this particular part of the journey going back as far as Sy Rogers (syrogers.com). Years ago the church I attended at the time aired one of his messages. Though I remember little of the content, I resonated in spirit, and know I will carry much of his tone, or style, or both. I know he fits in – at least into *my* journey, picture. He later came to our church – but I don't think he could really say what he needed to. You see – we lived in black and white Christianity – yet he spoke something different, or different-ly. I think he was *conversational*.

And I *think* I know what he *wanted* to say about [deleted], but couldn't.

And then I step many years forward to John Fischer's book... *Confessions of a Caffeinated Christian* ... where I am challenged to engage culture ... coffee-house encounters, dialogue. I must now run into what we used to call 'sinners'. People ... needing salvation.

I must now accept people we may have been conditioned to reject. I don't like it – but I know he is hitting on something.

And now I must say that as my head comes out (of the sand) ... as I emerge from a dark time in which the spiral was downward for way longer than I would have liked (or like to admit) ... I find the way to healing expressed by journaling (in my journey) ... a dialogue, a conversation.

And I meet people who do not fit the norm. A student with a *boy's* name and with like passions as I in photography - whom I think is male – but who can pass for a female in [deleted] photography. What 'box' do I put him in to (or her)?

(One day he came to class wearing a dress.)

And about people who are 'cut' ... God made male and female, yes, yet one in a thousand are neither, or something in between, or were more one than the other, until, or after, surgery. They are damned for having a partner of either sex.

And now that we are on McLaren ... while I may not have heaven and hell 'future' figured out - I DO KNOW I can produce my own hell here on earth. (Been there done that.)

And so while I try with all my might to live the Christianity that I understand, and fail, I also encounter in daily life things way outside of

that very same Christianity.

And so I resonate most with seemingly a few people I find that vibrate with the Spirit of God, and yet don't necessarily fit into any local church. People who want to see God come down - yet with vices, with problems, with strange relationships, and maybe mixed up theology. (My Christianity - though not entirely figured out - is certainly *not* mixed up - but it is off the main stream.) I think. And maybe even some colored language??? (God forbid!) But believers not afraid to see a demon and cast him/her/it out. People who are not afraid to give, though they have nothing. People not afraid to cross the street and call sinners (not Christians) to repentance.

It is with these people I long to pray and converse. We are hungry together.

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And so I go on a business trip to Bend, Oregon.

I will say right now that I don't pretend to be a 'good' (or healthy) Christian, at least by normal standards. Perhaps my only hope is that I am he who beat upon his breast - and who Jesus said was more righteous than the religious man before him. I 'suck air' much more than I like.

I contemplate what I have experienced ... coming out, climbing up ... emerging ???

I read a number of John Eldredge's books, considered anathema by some (*Wild at Heart*, and others). And while they should probably not be used to build a church or denomination - I think God could and did use them - to speak to me at least.

And so now I think of *Braveheart* ... where does he/it fit into our Christian box?

God hasn't spoken to me out of the mouth of an ass - but several years ago while I ran from him in a church shepherding class ... he cornered me with *his same (shepherding) agenda* ... while I was 'hiding from him' in Normal Schwazkopf's *It Doesn't Take a Hero*.

(And so now you know that my Christianity is conversational, and that hearing from God is not LIMITED to the Scriptures.)

And so, back to my trip to ...

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Oh, first ... Erwin Raphael McManus ... who is considered a part of the Emerging Church (movement or non-movement) by at least some, but who himself is apparently trying to distance himself *from it*. He speaks of '*Uprising*' (book title) ... an uprising of Christian character. I must say I may or may not like what I read - but he has challenged me, with effectiveness, to a higher way of Christian living as a husband and parent.

So I read the Gospels in my devotional time. And while with all my might I try to figure out a Christianity that I can successfully understand and execute - I see the one preached by Jesus as something different altogether (than the one I am trying to live). In fact, we are not on the same page whatsoever. I am trying to be good. I would like to live right ... but Jesus is speaking of (*another?*) realm. Another reality? ... not religious, not about black or white, not about theology, but about how we *treat other people*. And I read about demons, and angels, and healing, and raising people from the dead.

And so now I also think about Sasquatch, Bigfoot (Sassie, Biggie) – who I heretofore dismissed – but others have seen him, and her.

And so I can say that Bigfoot, or Speaking in Tongues, or demons, or angels ... are not for today. But who am I fooling?

And so while I may not have *experienced* certain things in Christianity – that certainly doesn't mean they don't exist – especially things other people *have* (experienced).

So I propose that I ought to live the way Jesus commanded, and lived.

And in my Christian experience – I obtained a degree in Biblical Studies, and even taught at a Bible College – and from there went on to treat people pretty crappy. Especially those closest to me. And so while I know *all about* salvation - it is well out of reach ... until I repent, change. Jesus as my savior (theologically) means little when I have my own personal hell I'm living in – until, perhaps, I grab hold, beg for help, repent, and 'keep trying' to *treat other people* better.

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On to Bend ...

So as I try to sort all this out ... Justin Timberlake's song *What Goes Around Comes Around* is faintly ringing in my ears ...

I at times turning on the radio and scanning channels, hoping to find it, but knowing I must not ... as I must find God at this juncture – not my favorite song. (Gasp, Justin Timberlake ... I heretofore hated him, a sinner, ... How could I admit I like a non-Christian song?) (And I am impressed what he did.)

(And not only does the song show incredible talent - but it marvels me that the *unsaved world* can hit such talent - while the Church sits in shades from black to white - with a lot of gray – but no color!)

And `sucks air`, hard.

So I look to Christian radio ... after I have listened without satisfaction to the Christian CDs I have brought along ...

I find a station that is airing a Crosstalk interview, host and guests talking about the Emergent Church. As I am listening ... (remember, my head has been in the sand) ... this Emergent Church stuff sounds bad, really bad. New Age, not holding to the scriptures, heresy, casting *spells*.

But as I listen on ... I find myself starting to back up (not my Jeep, but in my immediate alliance with the host and guests) ... there is a razor's edge to what they are saying. I suddenly feel that if I am to somehow say the wrong thing, align with the Emergent – I will be quickly flayed, or burned to the stake by these people, for heresy. Certainly if burning to the stake were legal – they would administer it, quickly, to these `emergents`.

Not that I agree (yet) with these emerging views – but, whao – if I do agree.

One of the speakers discusses his shift from ministry to the JWs and Mormons to one of battling the Emergent Church.

Gosh, my wife has met and talked with McManus – and really liked him ... and I have read ... of his books.

Retreat from the front lines to fight ... *each other*???. This thing makes me *very uncomfortable*. I may or may not be `emergent' - heck - right now I don't even know what that means - but I sure don't want to get in the `cross' hairs of these (Crosstalk / CRN) people.

Even before I find I'm emergent – I find a battle raging.

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... home (from Bend) I start to look up some of this stuff on the Internet. Ughhh ... (or yay!) ... I find McManus, McLaren listed among the people in the Emergent Church movement (with or without their permission) ... I look on and find T.D. Jakes is accused of heresy. Apparently his understanding of the Trinity is flawed. Whoa, and those in association with him shunned. And my wife has one of his (TJ's) books on her shelf.

Whoa.

And so I think back into my recent journey, for it appears I have emerged Emergent, and didn't even know it. How could I? – I barely now know what it even is. I am done trying to convert people to a certain way of thinking, a set of right and wrong, burdens too weighty for me to carry ...

Some of my friends, dear friends, and, as I find out, certain followers of a Reformed movement, are ... followers of ...

[Deleted]

... listed among those opposing the Emergent Church.

So now I must also find out about this Reformed church – because it is perhaps something different than the thing I am experiencing.

These people deal with thinking, theology, ...

Jesus dealt with how we treat people, using stories.

The `reformed' use terms and words I hardly understand ... (reductionist, -ism, propositional truth, ...)

And people may not have LIKED what Jesus said – but they certainly *understood* what he was saying.

(And He healed people, and cast out demons.)

Oh,

BTW ... Sy Rogers talks about ...