

Is Anne Rice fried or does she have a point?

Written by Calvin Fox

Monday, 09 August 2010 17:05 - Last Updated Monday, 09 August 2010 17:27

There are an increasing number of books and surveys documenting an exodus of Christians from local churches. Many fault the churches they know for not welcoming and meeting the needs of singles, gays, unwed moms and their children, couples without children, the handicapped and Senior citizens. Of of course, there are exceptions to all of this and the evidence is mostly anecdotal.

Others claim that churches they know are not open, diverse and welcoming to all kinds of people. They claim these churches are often bigoted, racist, discriminatory, legalistic and, in a word, fail to Love. Many younger evangelicals fall into the latter category of critics. They fault their church for lack of social consciousness and social activism. For them that is what being Christian is all about.

I have posted articles about these criticisms and these defections on this Blog. It is a huge problem. The most common response is that these drop outs are not true Believers and are really rejecting Christ and Christianity. These commentators are not listening to the critics. The latter have a beef with the local church, not Christ. An extreme example is author Anne Rice who famously declared last week on Facebook that she remains committed to Christ, but is no longer a Christian and wants nothing to do with organized Christianity. She accuses the latter of being absolutely terrible and intolerable in the way they treat each other and people generally.

The question is: can you have Christ and not the organized, institutional Church? I posted an article about the visible Church on this website last week. The answer is "No!" Christ Himself instituted a Church. It is His Body and He loves it, died for it and will come again to claim it. So how can Anne Rice or the thousands of other church drop-outs still claim to be committed to Christ?

This, however, does not let particular local churches off the hook. These critics are right about many of them. I agree with many of the criticisms. The drop-outs must not give up, but look around and find churches with better track records. (I say better, not perfect) And the churches with any of these problems must clean up their act. In fact, Jesus expects exactly that. Listen to what He says to the local churches described in Revelation 1-4. The NT Letters make it very clear that churches can be rife with sin. They must repent and change their ways or Christ will close them down (and He has done that innumerable times). The very last thing church leaders want to do is stick their heads in the sand and deny what is true. Instead of pointing fingers at their detractors, saying they are not saved, church Leaders must work to be sure they themselves are.

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