

Rachel Held Evans Departs Evangelicalism: Are Millennials Next?

Progressive Christian writer Rachel Held Evans announced this month in an interview with Religion News Service columnist Jonathan Merritt that she has joined the Episcopal Church. While Evans resists characterizations that she has abandoned evangelicalism, the author of *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* has distanced herself from evangelical understandings of salvation and biblical authority.

Chelsen Vicari, Director of IRD's Evangelical Action program, commented:

"In some cases trains are passing in the night: Figures such as Evans reject aspects of evangelical Christianity in favor of liberal expressions found in the Episcopal Church or Emergent Church movement. Simultaneously, those groups are failing to reproduce themselves or witnessing congregants move towards orthodox, liturgical or historic Christian churches.

"Research tells us that evangelicals are drifting further away from the orthodox truths their parents held dear. Our churches have rarely—if ever—faced the exodus we are seeing today. This will have a direct effect on the spiritual and moral values that will shape the nation in the coming years.

"The culture wars, growth of family, success of missions, prosperity of our nation—the future rests on millennial evangelicals' worldview. That is cause for concern, because something has gone wrong with young evangelicals' theology.

"The millennial generation's susceptibility to 'feel-good' teaching is playing a part in America's moral decline. Millennials' religious practices depend largely on how actions

make us and others feel, biblical or not. We only attend churches that leave us feeling good about our lifestyle choices, even if those conflict with God's clear commandments.

"Liberal evangelical authors tell young evangelicals that if they accept abortion and same-sex marriage, then the media, academia and Hollywood will finally accept Christians. Out of fear of being falsely dubbed 'intolerant' or 'uncompassionate,' many young Christians are buying into theological falsehoods. Millennials are forgoing the authority of Scripture and embracing a couch potato, cafeteria-style Christianity—all in the name of tolerance.

"By becoming an Episcopalian, Evans is now truthfully aligned with a denomination representing her views. Other like-minded 'evangelicals' should follow her example instead of exploiting the evangelical market even after they've long left evangelical beliefs."

Vicari's book *Distortion* is published by Frontline. Her recent article "How the New Christian Left Is Twisting the Gospel" appeared in *Charisma* magazine.