

The Emerging Church - what is it and from whence doeth it emerge

More and more Christians say the usual ways of "doing church" no longer resonate in a contemporary, postmodern culture. Seeking to fill the gap, a growing movement called "the emerging church" is developing new forms of worship and theological questioning for a new cultural context.

Religion and Ethics - <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week845/cover.html>

Over the past five years (perhaps longer) in both the [USA](#) and the [UK](#) as well as in other parts of the world there has been a blossoming of what sociologists have called [Generation X](#). Gen X church reflects the difference of this generation to its forebears but if this were all that was going on we could simply talk about the church in postmodernity.

However, across the generations a freshness has awoken in a seeming random stratified sample of the church. Some have been subject to "spiritual abuse" and thus repulsed from the church, for others they have felt the need to simply depart and seek truth for themselves. While yet in others they hear the ringing of alarm bells, the call of the spirit, the call to action... call it what you want but something that has so far defied full classification has begun.

For those in America this movement has called itself the emerging church (or the Emerging Church of America (ECoA)). It is a church emerging from the shadow of "old wine skins".

But the truth is, as always, a little larger than you imagine.

I actually have mixed feelings on the term - partly because so many people use it to describe so many things - many of which I'm not sure are really too 'emerging'.

I also don't really like to 'define' things because then they tend to become boxed. The beauty of what I see happening around the world when it comes to communities of followers of Jesus is that there is such diversity, creativity and fluidity. I worry that when we label we perhaps run the risk of institutionalizing a dynamic movement of God.

http://livingroom.org.au/blog/archives/what_is_the_emerging_church.php

Some writers have called it the Final third of the reformation, the second reformation or the encroaching revival. Like all of these things and their historical examples this has drawn fire, abuse, hard words and (for lack of a better word) persecution. As always this persecution has come from the deeply entrenched and established hierarchy. More so as this new movement seeks to do without the pillars of power in a very mid-60s trend towards community, equality, freedom and acceptance. Christianity has become experiential as of days of old...

At the heart of the Emergent Church movement—or as some of its leaders prefer to call it, the "conversation"—lies the conviction that changes in the culture signal that a new church is "emerging." Christian leaders must therefore adapt to this emerging church. Those who fail to do so are blind to the cultural accretions that hide the gospel behind forms of thought and modes of expression that no longer communicate with the new generation, the emerging generation.

Modern Reformation Magazine, "Faith a La Carte" (July / August 2005 Issue, Vol. 14.4).

<http://www.modernreformation.org/dac05emerging.htm>

For many this movement is about reevaluating everything, moving Christ out of dusty buildings and into the community. [Church](#) becomes the loose association of people who gather in each other's house to [pray](#) and share in an emulation of the church as described in the book of [Acts](#).

This has thrown up many anomalies such as Open Source Theology (<http://opensourcetheology.net>) a site for the emerging church to debate and reform its own theology.

Emerging church is characteristically postmodern in its suspicion of the controlling structures of religious life and thought: church hierarchy, dominant cultural forms, doctrinal formulations, and so on. So the life and practice of emerging church are marked by a resistance to these structures, but also by a desire to develop positive alternatives.

<http://www.opensourcetheology.net/node/229>

One of the leading critics of the emerging church in general and Open Source Theology specifically has been Ingrid Schlueter who speaks via website sliceoflaodicea.com as a sort of self-proclaimed guardian of Christianity, an inquisitor after truth...

Open source theology. Think about that. It's computer program lingo which I will not attempt to explain but sum it up this way: any source will do, take it, just use it.

http://www.sliceoflaodicea.com/archives/2006/01/open_source_the.php

But this is not all that this freshness has to offer. This "reporter" has been in the UK among the silent and carefully growing "gangs" of christians for whom the wisest and most educated members are theology graduates, life time misionaries and other profound and well grounded persons who each fully and deffinitly refuse to found "another church".

What we are looking at is not a movement but a subltal change in attitude across the board.

It is as if these people are all listening to the same very quite small voice. They move in parrellele directions, their ideas and actions are complimentary and yet for many they are like the wind itself. You can see their effects, and you see them but no one knows where they are going or where they came from...

It sounds very peacfull very gental and even good. Yet it is the willingness to challenge everything for its value. To try every beliefe and attitude in a hot and public fire that seems to scare the life from more traditional leaders (although not all).

Such questions as "Has the bible become a god?" and "Is the root of most of the problems with the church the leadership system itself?" (both found at laityonline.com) are sure to make many christians slightly uncomfirtable. For those whose way of life could end due to such questions it must bring utter terror.

Denial of the Word of God and its ABSOLUTES is a hallmark of someone who wants to "conversate" everything to come up a theology that more acceptable to man than the real thing.

http://www.sliceoflaodicea.com/archives/2006/01/open_source_the.php comments

Being a post-modern movement it is, naturally, fully embarcing modern technology and the internet is ripe with Emergant Conversation once you start looking for it.

<http://www.theooze.com/main.cfm><http://emergingchurchblogs.info/><http://www.emergentvillage.com/Site/index.htm><http://emergingchurchnetwork.com/><http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/011/12.36.html>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerging_Church<http://www.emergingchurch.org/><http://www.emergingchurch.info/><http://blog.planetpreterist.com/virgil><http://laityonline.com><http://www.opensourcetheology.net>etc. etc..

The question therefore arrises as to where all this is heading?

Considerable emphasis is placed on relational paradigms as the basis for all forms of Christian activity. In many instances this has encouraged a shift away from 'concentric' or 'solid' towards decentred or 'liquid' expressions of community (see, for example, the review of Pete Ward's Liquid Church). This has also led, inevitably, to a blurring of boundaries, both between church traditions and between believers and non-believers.

<http://www.opensourcetheology.net/node/229>

There seems to be two most likely destinations. A revived more "God like" church or a giant heritical cult.

...[pagan](#), [inter-faith](#), synergistic, transformational ([new age](#)) universalism.

http://www.sliceoflaodicea.com/archives/2006/01/open_source_the.php comments

What seems most prominent just currently is that the fear people seem to have for what is being debated far outstrips anything that is actually being done. There is the suggestion that fear and paranoia are currently the biggest dangers for those that oppose this "movement" than any actual threat to thier status.

This E2 Special was created from draft and notes created in preperation for writing an article for submission to variouse sites for publication.

About the Author

written by [Matt](#) for [Laity online](#) the site where you are the preacher. "This article was created from draft and notes created in preperation for writing an article for submission to variouse sites for publication."

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