**Introducing the Emerging Church, Part 1**
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From the very beginning, the battle between good and evil has been a battle for the truth. The serpent, in the Garden of Eden, began his temptation by questioning the truthfulness of God's previous instruction: "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'? ... "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:1,4-5). And this has been his tactic ever since--casting doubt on the straightforward revelation of God.

Throughout the centuries, this age-old war on truth has been repeatedly fought even within the church. The biblical writer Jude, for instance, faced such a situation when he wrote his epistle. Though he had wanted to write about the wonders of the common salvation that he shared with his readers, he was compelled instead to urge his readers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). False teachers, like spiritual terrorists, had secretly crept into the church (v. 4). The lies they were spreading, like doctrinal hand grenades, were spiritually devastating. They were enemies of the truth, and Jude was compelled to expose and confront them.

Over the past few decades, the church in the United States has fought this very battle on several fronts. In the sixties and seventies, the doctrine of biblical *inerrancy* came under direct attack. The Bible, it was said, was full of errors, and thus could not be trusted as historically or scientifically accurate. In the eighties and nineties, the *sufficiency* of Scripture was targeted. The charismatic movement (with its need for additional revelation from God) and Christian psychology (with its emphasis on neo-Freudian counseling techniques) attempted to undermine the fact that God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him," as revealed in Scripture (2 Pet. 1:3).

As the millennium drew to a close, the attack on God's revealed truth came in a new way. This time the *relevance* of Scripture was the point of attack. Rather than being directly maligned, the Bible was quietly discarded by church leaders for whom biblical teaching was simply not a major priority. "The Seeker Movement," more or less advocated limiting the presentation of divine truth to what

unbelievers are willing to tolerate.

A new movement is now arising in and around evangelical circles. Now, it appears, the main object of attack will be the *perspicuity* of Scripture. Influenced by postmodern notions about language, meaning, subjectivity, and truth, many younger evangelicals are questioning whether the Word of God is clear enough to justify certainty or dogmatism on any point of doctrine. Ironically, this new movement more-or-less ignores all of the previous debates. Instead, its proponents are much more interested in dialogue and conversation. As a result, propositional truth (which tends to end dialogue rather than start it) is scorned and rebuffed as an outmoded vestige of twentieth-century modernism.

This movement is very diverse and still developing, but it is generally referred to as "*the Emerging Church*."

Today's post comes from John article in the Fall 2006 issue of The Master's Seminary Journal. The full text of this article, along with other helpful articles regarding the Emerging Church, can be read by obtaining a copy of the journal from The Master's Seminary.

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