

# The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 28, NO. 4

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2008

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## There's No Place Like Rome? Understanding the Ancient-Future Faith Movement

by Gary E. Gilley

Rumors are starting to circulate that the emergent church movement is running out of steam. After making the biggest splash and the most noise of anything in the Christian community for many years, it appears to be approaching exhaustion. Some such as Rob Bell and Erwin McManus who are clearly in the "emergent conversation" have denied their involvement. And people seem a bit tired of hearing about postmodernism, its rejection of universal truth, and its promotion of relativism. These things play out nicely in philosophy class and college coffee shops, but have serious limitations in the real world.

But the emergent church has not died; it is just morphing. Emergent has largely been a backlash against the seeker-sensitive movement with its slick programs, high-octane entertainment, and superficial worship.

Where the seeker-sensitive movement attempted to make the Church look like the world, emergent youth



want a sense of the sacred. Where the seekers wanted to offer everything the world offered in purified form, the emergents want experiences the world cannot offer. Where the seekers repudiated Church history and behaved as if the Church had been born yesterday, the emergents want not only a link to the past but a return to the past. These elements have always been present in emergent but are just now rising to the top of the conversation. It is not enough to complain about the modern Church or to brush aside all claims of truth as relative. Roots of some kind must anchor the movement if it is to last. What gives this conversation a point of reference and at the same time

(continues on page 11)

### Inside this Issue:

COME OVER TO MY HOUSE .....	PAGE 2
STRANGE - AND NOT SO STRANGE - BEDFELLOWS .....	PAGE 3
DISCIPLESHIP DETERIORATION - BILL HULL'S RUSH TO ROME ..	PAGE 4