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1. To encourage *reformation* in local Christian churches worldwide.
2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.

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The conviction of the staff and editors of the *Reformation & Revival Journal* is that awakening, of the kind seen in the First Great Awakening in America, wedded to the doctrinal concerns of the historic Protestant Reformation as expressed in the terms *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, is needed in our generation.

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**INTRODUCTION—
THE EMERGENT CHURCH:
INVENTION OR INNOVATION?**



John H. Armstrong

A leading voice for church renewal has rightly noted, in a popular multi-authored book which addresses the church in modern culture, that there is a considerable difference between invention and innovation. Evangelicals seem to rarely display an awareness of this important difference. A great deal of good would come from gaining such awareness.

Invention comes from the Latin word *inventus*, which means that you start from scratch, thus you discover, or invent, something entirely new. Innovation, on the other hand, comes from the root word *nova*. It is now used popularly in astronomy to describe a great heavenly star that is made new again. Innovation means that you take something that is old and make it fresh or new. Innovation takes something that you already have and then combines it with what is fresh and thus brings about reformation. In a very real sense the reformer always goes back, but only so that he can go forward.

Leonard Sweet has noted, "there is something about going back that makes you go forward. The history of Christianity is filled with 'reformers' who sought only to purify what existed, and they ended up propelling Christianity forward at blazing speed."¹ Yes, reformers do go back, but always in order to go forward. Thus Christian reformers are

not revolutionaries, but they are filled with vision and zeal for renewing the church of God.

Western society is becoming less and less religious by the day, yet spirituality is increasing. Claims for authority, especially biblical and moral authority, are under regular attack (in and out of the church). At the same time there is a distinct hunger for a deeper and deeper experience of God that has not been seen in America for more than three and a half decades. Added to these discernable shifts, we are also warranted to ask about the growing role of visual imagery upon the modern mind, which seems to be replacing a word-based culture.

How then are we to understand the present culture of the West, especially in the light of various attempts being made by younger Christian leaders who are labeled by the popular adjective, or even noun, "emergent"? In this journal we address some issues related to this subject.

It is widely agreed that Brian McLaren, the founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in the Baltimore-Washington area, is one of the most important spokespersons for this new missional trajectory known as emergent. Brian is a talented man. He writes songs, loves art, reads widely (he taught literature), appreciates drama, the Romantic poets, and modern philosophical literature, and speaks with passion and conviction. He is never bombastic, shows consistent evidence of genuine humility in his public and private dialogues, and generally causes a reaction wherever he speaks about modern evangelical Christianity in America.

After meeting Brian McLaren for the first time about eighteen months ago, I began to read his work with much greater personal interest. I have real appreciation for his distinctive apologetic and missional concerns. His words often make me uncomfortable. I like this, once I step back and think a bit more deeply. But I also have concerns about Brian's "manifesto," as expressed in his book, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Zondervan, 2004). For this reason our editors decided some months ago to do extensive reviews and critiques of this widely read book. We felt it was important to allow Brian to

respond to these critiques. He happily accepted our invitation, for which I am profoundly grateful. As a result you can now enter into this conversation in a very helpful way.

Besides this *Reformation & Revival Journal* dialogue with Brian McLaren, the current issue tackles issues related to the wider conversation. Perhaps the most important missionary-theologian of our time was the late Lesslie Newbigin. His work has had an important impact upon emergent thinkers. We introduce you to Newbigin's work in this issue. We also take a good look at the role of women in the emergent church movement and issue a call for keeping preaching central in modern reformation.

I think this is one of the very best quarterly journals we have ever produced. I hope you agree. There is a lot here to stir both the heart and the mind, leading to a deeper consideration of how the church is renewed in any age—through proper attention to Word and Spirit working powerfully and freely together in the body of Christ.

Notes

1. Leonard Sweet, ed., *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 33.



NO, I'M AFRAID YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ENTER, BUT WE DO HAVE A NICE TROPHY FOR EACH OF YOU.

Identity, acceptance, belonging, connection to the whole and meaning—these are the stuff of faith, the genome of Christianity. The continued demand for them will create openings for the church. Can the church welcome these opportunities, while critiquing the excesses of consumerism at the same time?

MICHAEL MOYNAGH

I can only answer the question, "What am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question, "Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?"

ALISDAIR MCINTYRE