

The Emerging Church - June, 2011

The often titled "Emerging Church" is a growing phenomenon within the Christian world and is something that New Church people would do well to come to understand. We have long questioned our identity and our place in the world. Now, with the growth of the Emerging Church, we may have found a public readiness for the unique and life-changing message that the New Church has to bring.

Simply put, the Emerging Church is an attempt to recast the model of what being "Christian" means. Gone is the model of "you come to us." In its place is the idea of "we'll come to you." Also gone is the traditional notion of "exclusivity", the idea that only some people are in a position to be saved . Instead, there is a sense of God's presence across the human spectrum, including people who have not come to know Jesus in the orthodox Christian sense.

Within the Emerging Church is the freedom to explore questions and experiment with new religious forms. There is also a strong sense that traditional Christianity has often focused too heavily on doctrine and has forgotten about the need for living what you believe.

While there is much within this movement that New Church people might praise, it does have one potentially serious downside. Where orthodox Christian thinking has been set aside, strange and misdirected human thinking sometimes takes its place. Whereas the Emerging Church movement often suggests that there is no absolute truth, or at least none that we can now grasp, the New Church teaches that the Old and New Testament Word of God is absolute truth, and that this truth can be understood through the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The Emerging Church movement is not New Church. Still, it provides the freedom wherein people, as they freely explore the place of God in human lives and what a God-inspired life looks like, might well discover that the New Church is the place for real answers to life's real questions. We cannot know for certain, but it seems like *"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"* (Matthew 21: 42).

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