

INTRODUCTION

STILL SUBMERGENT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

I WAS BORN IN 1977. I am a pastor. And I am not emergent.

I grew up in a suburb of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in a community with strong Dutch Reformed roots. I was nurtured in a Christian home by loving, God-fearing parents who work in missionary radio. Along with my parents and three siblings, I went to a medium-size Reformed church that was more broadly evangelical than Reformed. Rain or shine, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, I went to church twice every Sunday, attended youth group Sunday evenings, and participated in midweek programs most every Wednesday night. In other words, I grew up in an evangelical home, in an evangelical church, in an evangelical part of the country.

For many, this upbringing explains why I am a conservative, Reformed pastor. But for others, it might seem strange that I have aligned myself so closely with historic evangelical orthodoxy in general and Reformed confessional the-

There are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there.

—G.K. CHESTERTON, *The Everlasting Man*



ology more specifically. In many ways, I am a great candidate for the emerging church.

For starters, I am a part of generation X (or Y, or busters, or millennials; I can never keep the labels straight). I should resonate with 80s chic, dialogical preaching, and techno-savvy churches. With all the television and movies I've seen, I should be less linear, and more attuned to stories and images. At the very least, I should be in some quarter-life crisis of faith. I should be wondering how all that I've known as Christianity can survive in this postmodern matrix. I should be questioning church as we know it and reimagining church for my generation.

After all, I grew up in the evangelical ghetto of conservative West Michigan. I should be joining many of my peers in decrying the evangelical "bubble" and its closed-minded, doctrinally rigid accounting of the Christian faith. After having my evangelical faith deconstructed by many of the faculty at the middle-of-the-road denominational college I attended, I should have tried to make peace with my conservative upbringing and the more liberal Christianity of my professors by veering off into the emergent world of mystery, journey, and uncertainty—the perfect porridge of not quite fundamentalist, not quite liberal. I should have (after enjoying all the benefits of safety, provision, and love) rebelled against my family upbringing, finding it, in hindsight, stilted, stoic, and staid. I should have, like so many of those in the emerging church, chafed against my evangelical past and charted a more emerging future.

But I haven't.

Presently, I pastor a medium-size church in East Lansing, Michigan, across the street from Michigan State University (about 45,000 students). I preach long, doctrinal, expositional sermons that proclaim the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the reality of hell, the demands of obedience, the call to evangelism, the duty of mercy ministry, and the glorious truths of unconditional election and particular redemption (though not everyone in the church finds these last two truths as glorious as I do).

The church I serve has MSU undergraduates, grad students, international students and scholars, MSU employees, faculty, and department heads. There are non-MSU folks as well, but I'm amazed at how many are connected to the university in some way. Their presence at the church is no great commendation of my ministry. I've been at the church only a few years. Many of them were here long before I arrived. I mention the setting and makeup of the church simply to make clear that I am not the pastor of an ethnically, culturally, or theologically homogenous church. True, East Lansing is still the Midwest. It's not quite San Francisco or New York. But being a university town gives the city a much more diverse, academic, and liberal bent than, say, the town I grew up in seventy-five miles west of here.

My ministry in East Lansing has, up to this point, been short, unremarkable, and hopefully, faithful. A number of people have joined our church. Some have left. We've started some new ministries and stopped some others. There have been a few controversies and a few successes. Unbelievers have been converted and believers built up in the faith. We're plodding visionaries trying to learn the Bible, love one another, share the gospel, and worship God in spirit and truth.

The point is that at thirty years old I am no great success story as a pastor and no brooding melancholic either. I love preaching and love my church. I hope my congregation loves good preaching and loves one another.

Why begin with autobiography? Not because I have some great story to tell. Most of the rest of this book (my part at least) will be light on story and heavy on more academic reflection. I share a few pages about myself only to demonstrate that you can be young, passionate about Jesus Christ, surrounded by diversity, engaged in a postmodern world, and reared in evangelicalism and not be an emergent Christian. In fact, I want to argue that it would be better if you weren't.

WHAT AND WHO ARE WE WRITING ABOUT?

In discussing this new movement, we will be using the terms *emerging* and *emergent* interchangeably. Strictly speaking, our criticism is not with those who try to engage the emerging culture, but rather with the emergent church. Some have made a distinction between the two words, *emerging* categorizing those who are trying to contextualize the gospel for postmoderns, and *emergent* referring to the organization now headed up by Tony Jones and associated especially with Doug Pagitt and Brian McLaren. For example, Mark Driscoll, of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, who has distanced himself from the emergent church while still trying to engage postmoderns, argues that “the emergent church is part of the Emerging Church Movement but does not embrace the dominant ideology of the movement. Rather, the emergent church is the latest version of liberalism. The only difference is that the old liberalism accommodated modernity and the new liberalism accommodates postmodernity.”¹ Driscoll may not be alone in making the distinction between emergent and emerging, but to carry the distinction through an entire book would be too burdensome for most readers.

When we talk about the emerging church, we are not simply referring to what is new, postmodern, culturally with-it, or generationally up and coming. Neither are we referring solely to the official Emergent organization. Some of the authors we quote are a part of Emergent Village, some aren't. We are talking about a movement led and inspired by a cadre of authors and pastors, who express many of the same concerns with the evangelical church, hit on many of the same themes, and often speak as the most influential voices in the emergent conversation. We don't want to get hung up on labels, let alone poison anything and everything that has been called emerging or emergent. But for the purposes of this book, the two words—emerging and emergent—mean the same thing.

As I've worked on this project, the number one question I've gotten from friends and family is, “So what is the emerging church anyway?” Defining the

emerging church is like nailing Jell-O to the wall. The “what” and “who” of the movement are almost impossible to define. This is due, in part, because the movement is new (at least in name and style if not always in substance). New movements are always more amorphous and less codified.

But the Jell-O-like nature of the emerging church is also intentional. It is, after all, a “conversation.” Emergent authors, bloggers, and pastors do not see themselves as leaders or authoritative theologians, but as talkers. This is one of the most admirable and frustrating parts about the emerging church. It's admirable because emerging Christians admit that their ideas are only exploration and experimentation and not definitive in any way. That's refreshingly honest and self-effacing. It's frustrating because the “we're just in conversation” mantra can become a shtick whereby emergent leaders are easy to listen to and impossible to pin down.

It's one thing for a high school student to be in process with his theology. It's another thing for adults to write books and speak around the world about their musings and misgivings. I agree there must be space for Christians to ask hard questions and explore the tensions in our faith, but I seriously question that this space should be hugely public where hundreds of thousands of men and women are eagerly awaiting the next book or blog or podcast arising from your faith journey. No matter what new label you put on it, once you start selling thousands of books, speaking all over the country and world, and being looked to for spiritual and ecclesiastical direction, you're no longer just a conversation partner. You are a leader and teacher. And this is serious business, for as James says, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (3:1).

Back to the question at hand—attempting an explanation of the emergent church. To some “emergent” means nothing more than a new style and approach to worship (“couches, candles, and coffee”). To others it signals an appreciation for postmodernism. To yet others it means a return to a more ancient, primitive, and pristine form of Christianity. At a popular level, “the

term *emerging church* has been applied to high-profile, youth-oriented congregations that have gained attention on account of their rapid numerical growth; their ability to attract (or retain) twentysomethings; their contemporary worship, which draws from popular music styles; and their ability to promote themselves to the Christian subculture through websites and by word of mouth.² Or, as Andy Crouch puts it in *Christianity Today*, emerging churches are “frequently urban, disproportionately young, overwhelmingly white, and very new.”³

One of its critics has described the emerging church as a protest movement—a protest against traditional evangelicalism, a protest against modernism, and a protest against seeker-sensitive megachurches.⁴ Others, sympathetic to the movement, have used the acronym EPIC: experiential, participatory, image driven, and connected.

Some definitions are so broad as to be of little help. What Christian does not want to “(1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives” and as a result “(4) welcome strangers, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities”?⁵ Other definitions work with dichotomies, contrasting modern ministry with post-modern as the movement from rationalism to embodiment, power to servanthood, information to formation, constraint to expression, parties to prayer, and theory to action.⁶

With such varied definitions, we have chosen to focus on the “what” of the emerging church by focusing on the “who.” Admittedly, this requires more Jell-O nailing. As any emergent Christian will tell you, no one speaks for the movement and no one speaks for anyone else. Again, very convenient and very frustrating. At a certain level, the emerging church becomes whatever anyone who calls themselves “emergent” happens to think at the moment.

In an article from theooze.com on June 2, 2005, entitled “Response to Recent Criticisms,” Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Spencer Burke, Brian McLaren,

Dan Kimball, Andrew Jones, and Chris Seay argue, “Contrary to what some have said, there is no single theologian or spokesperson for the emergent conversation. We each speak for ourselves and are not official representatives of anyone else, nor do we necessarily endorse everything said or written by one another.”⁷ Fine. But if seven men get together to respond to their critics in one article, they should at least admit they not only share much common ground, but they are also some of the lead influencers (if we can’t say spokespersons) in the conversation. Call it a friendship, or a network, or a web of relationships, but when people endorse one another’s book and speak at the same conferences and write on the same blogs, there is something of a discernible movement afoot.

Let this be crystal clear: We fully understand that *emergent* means a hundred different things to a hundred different people. So if what you read in these pages is not what you mean by emergent, so be it. We might encourage you to reconsider your labels, but if what we describe as emergent is not what you are as emergent, then by all means, be emergent. But if the emerging church exists as a real and identifiable movement (“conversation” if you like), then its spirit is surely captured in authors like Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Peter Rollins, Spencer Burke, David Tomlinson, Leonard Sweet, Rob Bell, and Tony Jones.

Here we need to add three caveats. First, we don’t think of our emergent sparring partners as “the bad guys.” No doubt many people reading this book have been helped by these men, either in person or by their writings. Living in the town where Rob Bell grew up and Bell living in the town where I grew up, I have heard many people, including some of my friends, rave about all they’ve learned from Bell’s teaching. I’ve heard him many times; he is a good teacher. And probably a good portion of what he teaches is perfectly fine. The same is probably true with most of the emergent authors we quote. We want to point out some serious concerns about their thinking (especially as expressed in their writing), but we don’t want to demean everything they say nor criticize anyone who has ever been blessed by their ministries.

Second, we realize that not everyone we critique in this book would gladly

wear the emergent label. We talk in a few places about men like Donald Miller and Erwin McManus. Their theology is certainly not identical to that of a Doug Pagitt or a Brian McLaren. We understand they may run in different circles, but we hear some of the same concerns and language being used. As we critique the emerging church we are not trying to critique a word or a label. We are trying to interact with a number of popular, mostly young, authors and pastors who advocate “doing church differently” in many of the same ways. Rob Bell is another example, one we quote frequently. Bell would probably not call himself or his church “emergent.” But his writing hits the same themes and quite often reaches the same conclusions as those under the emergent umbrella. Bell has also acknowledged the formative influence McLaren has had in shaping his ministry over the past several years.

The third caveat is closely related to the second. We realize that none of the men listed above (or quoted in the book) is an official spokesman and none can be held responsible for what the others say. We recognize this diversity of opinions, but we couldn't call the book *Why We Don't Agree with Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet, Rob Bell, and Doug Pagitt, Who May or May Not Agree with Each Other and Who May or May Not Speak for You as an Emergent Christian*. We think there are enough common themes, protests, and shared ideas in these authors, to name but a few, to engage them under the broader banner of the emerging church.

ARE YOU EMERGENT?

After reading nearly five thousand pages of emerging-church literature, I have no doubt that the emerging church, while loosely defined and far from uniform, can be described and critiqued as a diverse, but recognizable, movement. You might be an emergent Christian: if you listen to U2, Moby, and Johnny Cash's *Hurt* (sometimes in church), use sermon illustrations from *The Sopranos*, drink lattes in the afternoon and Guinness in the evenings, and always use a Mac; if your reading list consists primarily of Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen,

N. T. Wright, Stan Grenz, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Jim Wallis, Frederick Buechner, David Bosch, John Howard Yoder, Wendell Berry, Nancy Murphy, John Franke, Walter Winks and Lesslie Newbigin (not to mention McLaren, Pagitt, Bell, etc.) and your sparring partners include D. A. Carson, John Calvin, Martin Lloyd-Jones, and Wayne Grudem; if your idea of quintessential Christian discipleship is Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, or Desmond Tutu; if you don't like George W. Bush or institutions or big business or capitalism or *Left Behind* Christianity; if your political concerns are poverty, AIDS, imperialism, war-mongering, CEO salaries, consumerism, global warming, racism, and oppression and not so much abortion and gay marriage; if you are into bohemian, goth, rave, or indie; if you talk about the myth of redemptive violence and the myth of certainty; if you lie awake at night having nightmares about all the ways modernism has ruined your life; if you love the Bible as a beautiful, inspiring collection of works that lead us into the mystery of God but is not inerrant; if you search for truth but aren't sure it can be found; if you've ever been to a church with prayer labyrinths, candles, Play-Doh, chalk-drawings, couches, or beanbags (your youth group doesn't count); if you loathe words like *linear, propositional, rational, machine, and hierarchy* and use words like *ancient-future, jazz, mosaic, matrix, missional, vintage, and dance*; if you grew up in a very conservative Christian home that in retrospect seems legalistic, naïve, and rigid; if you support women in all levels of ministry, prioritize urban over suburban, and like your theology narrative instead of systematic; if you disbelieve in any sacred-secular divide; if you want to be the church and not just go to church; if you long for a community that is relational, tribal, and primal like a river or a garden; if you believe doctrine gets in the way of an interactive relationship with Jesus; if you believe who goes to hell is no one's business and no one may be there anyway; if you believe salvation has a little to do with atoning for guilt and a lot to do with bringing the whole creation back into shalom with its Maker; if you believe following Jesus is not believing the right things but living the right way; if it really

bugs you when people talk about going to heaven instead of heaven coming to us; if you disdain monological, didactic preaching; if you use the word “story” in all your propositions about postmodernism—if all or most of this tortuously long sentence describes you, then you might be an emergent Christian.

THE HOW OF THIS BOOK

Enough about “what” and “who.” Let me make a few general comments about the “how” of this book. First, we write this book as Christians writing about Christians. Therefore, we want to critique as Christians. Hopefully, our writing is of the “faithful are the wounds of a friend” variety and not the slanderous, mean-spirited kind. Our disagreements are strong and stated strongly but, we trust, not bitter and cantankerous. Emergent writers are often provocative and passionate, and so are we. We take this to be a good thing, on both sides. Why not, especially in this soft, limp-noodle age, believe in what you write and write like you believe it? But passion and provocation are not an excuse to be un-Christian. We love Jesus and love the church. We believe emergent Christians love the same. The shape and substance of that love is what we disagree on.⁸

Second, though our approach is critical, don’t assume we dislike all things emergent. The long sentence above describes Ted and me in some ways too. But because this book is *Why We Are Not Emergent* and not *An Evaluation of the Emerging Church*, we will not take much time to list what we appreciate about the movement, though we could. We too are wary of marketing gimmicks, how-to sermons, watered-down megachurches, and the effects of modernism. We fully recognize that the Bible has been abused and no one understands it exhaustively. We agree that there is more to Christianity than doctrinal orthodoxy. We welcome the emergent critique of reductionistic methods of “becoming Christian” (sign a card, raise your hand, say a prayer, etc.). We are glad for the emergent correction reminding us that heaven is not a cloud up above for disembodied souls in the sky, but the re-creation of the entire cosmos. We further agree that we ought to be concerned about bringing heaven to earth, not

just getting ourselves to heaven. In short, we affirm a number of the emergent diagnoses. It’s their prescribed remedies that trouble us most.

All that to say we are taking Bell’s advice given on the back of *Velvet Elvis* and applying it to the entire emerging church: “Test it. Probe it. Don’t swallow it uncritically. Think about it. Wrestle with it.” We write this book because the more we learn about the emerging church, the harder it is to swallow.

Third, for the most part we don’t deal with the more academic side of post-modernism. From time to time, we engage authors like Grenz and Raschke, but most of our dealings are with the popularizers, practitioners, and pastors of the emerging movement. Emergent leaders have often cried foul when their books have been held up to academic scrutiny. “We are not professional scholars,” they say, and neither are we. So it’s a fair fight—more fair than fight, we hope.

Fourth, as was said earlier, what we critique may not be what some self-described emerging Christians believe. The conversation is diverse.⁹ Dan Kimball is much more theologically responsible than Spencer Burke. Scot McKnight, who has aligned himself with the emerging church, is one of the few in the movement to gently critique the movement, for which we are thankful (though McKnight’s books are not by and large the ones being read by college students and young emergent pastors). We have tried to read widely of the literature, but we haven’t read everything in print, not to mention the books that have come since our writing began and whatever also might be on the blogosphere.

Similarly, it is possible that some authors in emerging circles, if push came to shove, would sound much more orthodox and evangelical than they come across in print. But the printed, public word is what we have, so we are responding with a printed, public word (as opposed to individually calling up every emergent leader to ask him, “Is this what you really mean?”). We have not knowingly misrepresented anyone’s beliefs. But if we’ve missed something, or someone has changed his mind, or some blog out there has what these guys really believe, we will be happy to be corrected. In fact, if our book

makes emerging folks indignant enough to stand up and tell us more definitively what they believe, we will consider this book a success.

We're not joking. We would love nothing more than for those in the emerging church to write up a statement explaining exactly what they believe on controversial issues like hell, the atonement, and the uniqueness of Christ. One of the hazards of being part of a movement whose only statement of faith says that you don't believe in statements of faith is that you are bound to be misread and lumped together with some ideas you don't like.

Once again, we have not knowingly misread the authors we critique. In fact, we have tried to avoid unfairly ascribing the more extreme views to everyone in the conversation. But when your movement avoids definition and doctrinal boundaries as one of its defining characteristics, it should not be surprising when people start to wonder aloud what you really believe.

Fifth, Ted and I write differently. This will be obvious. We approach our subjects by different means and write with different styles. But we are happy to write this book together because, for all our differences, we share the same heart for truth, love for the Bible, and concern over the emerging church. Because our approaches are hugely dissimilar, however, we thought it best to write separate chapters rather than work (futilely) to make our writing sound like one voice. We trust that any overlap in our chapters will not be too redundant and any slight differences between ourselves will be clear.

Finally, we write for the church—for our church, for our friends in other churches, and for our brothers and sisters in emerging churches. It's a privilege to write, and an even greater privilege to be read. So thank you. We pray that in some measure, small or large, as we speak the truth in love, we could all grow up in every way into Him who is the head of the body, into Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Kevin DeYoung

MAYBE— THE NEW YES

IT'S 6:35 P.M. and I'm in a committee meeting. Do emergent churches have committee meetings? I am the “young guy” presence on the committee, brought in, no doubt, because I “understand these people.” At any rate, this particular group is brainstorming ways to promote an upcoming talk by D. A. Carson. We're all staring intently at a group of response cards that will be handed out at the end of his talk. The cards include the usual stuff, like “Did you like the talk? Would you like a follow-up call? Check ‘yes,’ ‘no,’ or ‘maybe.’” Somebody suggests that we remove “maybe.” I suggest, since this is a talk on postmodernism, that we should remove everything except “maybe.”

The joke doesn't get the laugh I'm looking for. Cue drums and cymbals.

I don't really like Christian books. When I think of the words *Christian book*, I think of sappy self-help stuff that middle-aged women gush about and then forget in a matter of weeks. I think of untouchable writers with initials (D. A.,

J. I., R. C.), or writers with dollar signs in their eyes penning long series that could and should be much shorter. I pretty much never wanted to write one, but here I am.

As I write this introduction I am halfway through playing a season of professional indoor football, as research for my second book. This assignment has me living the life of the professional athlete—long bus rides, practices, games, and forays in and out of bars all over the Midwest. I am “interfacing with the world” and “engaging a diverse culture” on a daily basis. It’s grim. And these aren’t the kind of bars where you have thinky discussions about books and religion; they’re the kind of places you go to get bombed. To forget.

Let’s establish a few things. I am thirty-one years old, married for ten years. I am not cool. I write for a living, but I don’t lie around in my boxers until noon sipping Chianti out of the bottle, waiting to feel creative. I am not on a “journey,” and my testimony is of the bland, “raised in a Christian home” variety. My first book was about heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson, and my second was about football—again, not especially cool. I have never witnessed to anyone in a bar. I have never been so disillusioned with church that I made mix tapes and took a Cameron Crowe-esque car trip to find myself. This won’t be that kind of book.

As for the emergent church, I look the part. For writers there is no dress code per se, so I get around in jeans and a T-shirt most days. I have the requisite smart-guy dark-framed glasses (that will probably be dated by the time this hits the shelf). My wife keeps me in cool shoes, which is just one of the reasons I really appreciate her. As a result, people try to engage me in discussions about music and probably leave wildly disappointed. (My tastes run from 80s hair metal to rap—pretty Philistine stuff). People have also, lately, tried to recruit us into the emergent church. The meetings go something like this: We are verbally probed, to see if we have problems with our current church situation. Couldn’t church be done differently? (It could.) Shouldn’t we be engaging the culture at large? (We should.)

And then I sheepishly confess what I have to confess: I really like church.

My church, like many orthodox American Protestant churches, is pretty bland at first glance. It is a cinder-block bunker situated across the street from a university and up the road from about a hundred other churches. It has the requisite plastic chairs, lame carpet, and bad coffee. In five years I’ve never had a good cup of coffee there. But I love it. I love the people. And I love the teaching—it’s challenging and theologically significant. It’s spiritual meat in a world of beer, milk, and philosophical cookies. It’s a bubble that I am proud to be a part of, and I am being challenged there in ways that I never thought possible.

I have friends whom I love dearly who are making bad choices in the name of “experience”; expressing a counterfeit freedom gleaned from pages of well-meaning spiritual-journey books outlining their authors’ mistakes in all their sexy, glamorous glory. This book is for them. I believe that there is forgiveness for all of our sins, no matter how grievous the mistake, but I also know, from experience, that those sins create a chasm between us and our Lord.

But we’re not really writing this book to change people’s minds because, let’s face it, that rarely happens. The book will (hopefully) be read, will (probably) be blogged about, and will then probably be raked over the coals for being any combination of mean-spirited, short-sighted, too thinky and academic (Kevin’s chapters), or not thinky and academic enough (my chapters). But above all, this is our attempt at joining the “conversation,” because we’re concerned about a church that we love. Kevin’s chapters are longer and more propositional. Mine are shorter, and more “experiential,” because I’m not a seminary-trained theologian, rather, just a guy in the pew (or in our case, the plastic chair). We had fun with these differences, and they are intentional. If my chapters do nothing more than get you to keep reading Kevin’s, then I will consider it a job well done. And if, like some evangelicals, you’re too “frugal” to pay full price for the book and prefer to read it at the bookstore, read Kevin’s chapters first. They’ll be good for your soul.

And do know that while we do poke some fun at the emergent church and its cultural tics (okay, we poke a lot of fun at this), we wish to do so lovingly.

We strove to represent these guys accurately, and hope that if we were to run into each other at a conference, a coffee shop named *Ecclesia*, or a pub, we could truly enjoy each other's fellowship, cognizant of the fact that we will be together in the kingdom.

As an author, specifically in sports, I live in a world of “maybe.” This book is my attempt at writing something of worth. Sports are great, but sports—like my hip glasses, my used Volvo, my music collection, my trends—will burn eventually. As a Christian man, specifically a husband and father, I need truth. I need to worship a God who makes demands on my character, with consequences. I need to know that Christianity is about more than me just “reaching my untapped potential” or “finding the God inside me.” I need to know that I worship a Christ who died, bodily, and rose from the dead. Literally. I need to know that decisions can (and should) be made based on Scripture and not just experience. These are things that give me peace in a world of maybe.

Ted Kluck

Notes

1. Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformation Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2006), 21.
2. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 41.
3. Andy Crouch, “The Emergent Mystique,” *Christianity Today*, November 2004, 37.
4. D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 11–44.
5. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 45.
6. Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).
7. <http://www.theooze.com/articles/print.cfm?id=1151>
8. Despite all the talk of conversation and dialogue, some of the emergent books are prefaced in such a way that makes honest, constructive criticism very difficult. For example, McLaren writes in the forward to *Heretic's Guide to Eternity* by Spencer Burke and Barry Taylor (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), “It’s easy for inquisition-launchers to go on a fault-finding mission; they have lots of practice and they’re really good at it. What’s more challenging, and, regarding this book, much more worthwhile, is to instead go on a truth-finding mission. And yes, even in a book with ‘heretic’ in the title, I believe any honest reader can find much truth worth seeking. Perhaps even those who have become legally inebriated on the hops and malt of fault-finding, those who are inquisition-aholics but think they can quit anytime . . . perhaps

even they might get a brief glimpse in the mirror in these pages, a glimpse that will do them good” (ix–x). Bating your opponents as fault-finders and inquisition-aholics is not the best way to invite an open and honest conversation. It’s grossly unfair to begin a book by prejudging those who might disagree as “legally inebriated on the hops and malt of fault-finding.” It’s like beginning this book by saying, “There are many leaders out there who hate the truth. They have no taste for it and no appetite for it. They will not be able to stomach this book. But perhaps with a little practice they will develop the taste buds for truth and be able to savor something in this book. Bon appetite!” Perhaps emergent folks will dislike this book because they love the truth and think we’ve missed it. And perhaps non-emergent folks are critical of McLaren, Burke, Pagitt, and others not because we are heresy-hunters, but because we want to correct our opponents with gentleness, in order that God may lead them to repentance and a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25).

9. See Robert Webber, ed., *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). The five perspectives move from right to left on the theological spectrum. Mark Driscoll is a conservative, Reformed biblicist (his chapter has more than 700 scripture references) who can be called emergent only in the sense that he is reaching emergent generations. John Burke is a warm-hearted evangelical who does not “fully fit into the emerging camp,” but is softer around the edges than Driscoll (p.51). Dan Kimball is next along the spectrum. Kimball is the right-winger (theologically) of the emergent church, holding to Nicene orthodoxy (and believing in orthodoxy!), but clearly sympathetic with much of the movement. Doug Pagitt is more progressive than Kimball and sounds akin to old-school theological liberalism. Karen Ward is not the influencer that Pagitt is in the movement, but is aligned with the “heart” of the emergent movement.