

# The Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement

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A many-sided debate about the relations of Christianity and the emerging postmodern culture is going on in our time. On one side of the debate are those who believe the emerging postmodern culture is a myth. On the other side are those who believe the postmodern culture is emerging at such a rapid pace that a radical response is required to save the church from virtual extinction. Between these two extremes exists a seemingly unlimited number of positions. Arguably the most vocal and influential voice in this debate is coming from a worldwide group of Christian leaders participating in the Emerging Church Movement (ECM).<sup>1</sup>

These leaders maintain that a radical response to the postmodern culture is necessary. Since its inception in the mid-1990s through Leadership Network, ECM's impact has grown exponentially through conferences, books, and the internet. In 2005, *Time* magazine declared Brian McLaren, a primary ECM voice, as one of twenty-five most influential evangelicals in America today.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to deny the influence of ECM.

But despite its influence, defining ECM is difficult for two reasons. First, those within ECM resist formal organization and identity. There is no official leader or spokesperson to represent ECM.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the person who comes closest to this role is "the most influential leader in the Emerging Church," Brian McLaren.<sup>4</sup> However, McLaren does not even want ECM to be called a "movement," but prefers the more nebulous label of "conversation," so that ECM is not pigeonholed into one specific theology or methodology.<sup>5</sup> Second, those within ECM resist any systematizing of their theology. Since ECM's response to the emerging postmodern culture includes a rejection of the modern era, it necessarily rejects a foundationalist approach to theology, which it identifies with that era. For this reason, ECM rejects the idea of developing its own systematic theology. But despite these difficulties in assigning a precise definition to ECM, a working definition may be formulated by understanding its impetus and passion.

The impetus of ECM is found in the transition from the modern to the postmodern era, a transition ECM leader Tony Jones believes is akin to a "Second Reformation."<sup>6</sup> The passion of ECM is an appropriate Christian response to this transition. Regardless of the specific manner in which individuals within ECM attempt it, the passion to respond to it remains at the heart of everyone in the conversation. Grasping this impetus and passion in these terms can provide a working definition of ECM: *The Emerging Church Movement is an ongoing, worldwide conversation about how the Christian church must respond to and engage the emerging postmodern culture in order to continue to advance the mission of the church.* This definition might be complemented with a motto provided by McLaren:

“If you have a new world, you need a new church. You have a new world.”<sup>7</sup> It is this proposed “new church” that is of interest in this essay.

### ECM and Postmodernity

ECM’s understanding of church begins with its conceptions of the modern and postmodern eras. This is so important to ECM that nearly every book it produces includes some type of comparison and contrast of the two eras.<sup>8</sup> While authors vary in points of detail, all seem to embrace Stanley Grenz’s premise that these two eras are antithetical to one another. He presents the transition from the modern to the postmodern era as a shift from rationalistic to post-rationalistic, individualistic to post-individualistic, and dualistic to post-dualistic.

*From Rationalistic to Post-Rationalistic.* Grenz writes that one of the primary hallmarks of the modern era “is its elevation of reason.”<sup>9</sup> That is, moderns believe that the universe is governed by universal laws that are accessible by human reason, particularly human reason utilizing the empirical sciences and the scientific method. These allow a rational person to discover objective truth in an unbiased manner. In other words, moderns “felt that [they] could be sovereign, unbiased, autonomous, knowing subjects, rendering the world around [them] into objects...and rendering [their] knowledge cleanly objective.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, an appropriate summary of the modern worldview is that it “exercises an absolute faith in human rational capacities.”<sup>11</sup> The impact on Christianity, ECM claims, is that the modern world created a rationalistic-oriented faith.

But if the modern era is rationalistic, then the postmodern era is “post-rationalistic.”<sup>12</sup> That is, the postmodern holds that “our humanity does not consist solely in our cognitive dimension.”<sup>13</sup> Postmoderns continue to regard reason as *one* path to knowledge, but it is no longer the *only* path. Reason, as exemplified by the scientific method, may reveal some aspects of truth and reality, but other aspects remain accessible only through personal and communal experiences. The truth and reality of love between two people serves as an example. Moreover, the scientific method cannot achieve objective truth in an unbiased manner. Rather, a person carries along their emotions, intuition, experiences, and communal context with them even into the empirical sciences.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, postmoderns conclude that objective truth cannot be obtained through individual reason alone. The impact on Christianity, ECM claims, is that a faith built upon rationalism alone will not survive in a postmodern culture.

*From Individualistic to Post-Individualistic.* According to Grenz, another hallmark of the modern era “is the elevation of the individual.”<sup>15</sup> Since every individual is endowed with the capacity to discover objective truth for himself, external authorities or communities are not required for the acquisition of truth and the determination of what is right or wrong. The impact on Christianity, McLaren claims, is that the modern world created a faith of “me and Jesus, me and my Bible, me and my spiritual growth,

me and my salvation – getting my needs met, getting my soul fed, acquiring the religious goods and services needed for me and my happiness and my success.”<sup>16</sup>

But if the modern era is individualistic, then the postmodern era is post-individualistic. Since an individual cannot learn truth for himself, external authorities or communities *are* required for the acquisition of truth and the determination of what is right or wrong. In fact, knowledge about truth is dependent on the community’s construction of reality. And since one community’s construction of reality is different than that of another, postmoderns celebrate diversity and plurality, including a plurality of beliefs. Grenz asserts that this “communal nature of truth results in a new kind of relativism.”<sup>17</sup> The impact on Christianity, McLaren claims, is that the church must discover a “gospel that’s bigger than the salvation of my individual soul” and “an approach to the church experience in which ‘we’ does not exist for ‘me.’”<sup>18</sup>

*From Dualistic to Post-Dualistic.* A third hallmark of the modern era is dualism. “The Enlightenment project was built on the division of reality into “mind” and “matter.” This fundamental dualism found expression in the Enlightenment view of the human person as “soul” (thinking substance) and “body” (physical substance).<sup>19</sup> The impact on Christianity, ECM claims, is that the modern world created a faith that impacted only the religious part of the person, not the whole person. A person’s faith and religion is not often connected or operative in the other aspects of a person’s life, such as their work and play. As Tony Jones illustrates, dualism is “the idea that you can be a jerk at the office and unfaithful to your spouse but still be a faithful Christian.”<sup>20</sup>

But if the modern era is dualistic, then the postmodern era is post-dualistic. Gibbs and Bolger call this post-dualism “sacralization, the process of making all of life sacred” which has resulted in the “the destruction of the sacred/secular split of modernity.”<sup>21</sup> That is, every aspect of a person’s being is interrelated and each aspect of life influences and informs the others. The impact on Christianity, ECM claims, is that people must experience Christ both inside and outside of the church.

ECM is convinced that this postmodern era is an opportunity for advancing the Christian message. McLaren promotes three specific steps that the church must take to survive and thrive in a postmodern culture: understand it, engage it, and respond to it. First, the church must understand postmodernity.<sup>22</sup> The church must not deny that this transition has taken place, but must accept the postmodern culture as the prevailing one. Second, the church must engage postmodernity.<sup>23</sup> It is not enough for the church to merely understand postmodernity; it must engage it to accomplish its proper mission. The final step McLaren sees in this process is to “get ready for revolution.”<sup>24</sup> This step is certainly the most controversial, as revolution often means the dismantling of all things modern. Gibbs and Bolger summarize this process well: “one must dismantle the old, clear the way, before one can build something truly new.”<sup>25</sup> The “something truly new” is a new ecclesiology.

## ECM's Evangelical Ecclesiology

Like evangelicalism generally, ECM is a broad and diverse movement. Despite its diversity, however, it is embraced by those whose primary motivation is to connect the gospel of Jesus Christ to the culture of today. Therefore, ECM may be classified as broadly evangelical. To adopt Roger Olson's phraseology, ECM is *reformist evangelical* because of its progressive approach to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a postmodern era.<sup>26</sup>

But it is less obvious how this evangelical passion translates into an ecclesiology. John Stackhouse's appropriately titled *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* points to the difficulty of determining an evangelical ecclesiology. Bruce Hindmarsh concurs when he observes that "there is no distinctively evangelical doctrine of church order."<sup>27</sup> According to D. A. Carson, "it is not that evangelicals have no ecclesiology, but that we have several of them, to some extent mutually contradictory."<sup>28</sup> But through an analysis of official evangelical affirmations, two primary marks of an evangelical ecclesiology emerge: the Bible as the Word of God and the mission of the church.

Consistent with traditional Reformed ecclesiology, evangelicals believe that the preaching of the gospel as contained in the Word of God is the primary mark of the church.<sup>29</sup> Nearly every formal and informal statement of evangelical beliefs begins with a statement about the Word of God. To cite one example, agreement with a statement about the inerrancy of the Bible is one of only two doctrinal requirements for membership in the Evangelical Theological Society. So important is the Word of God to evangelicals that how one views the nature, authority, and translation of the Bible is often the determining factor for one's identity as an evangelical.

In addition to this affirmation of the Bible as the Word of God, most evangelical discussions of ecclesiology include the mission of the church. Evangelicals view the church as God's intended vehicle for accomplishing God's mission in the world: "The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel."<sup>30</sup>

ECM affirms these two marks of an evangelical ecclesiology, but develops them in a direction that is consistent with its own emphases. With traditional Reformed and evangelical ecclesiology, ECM agrees that the Word of God is a primary mark of the church. However, the value of the Word of God is not in its revelation of doctrine but in that of the person of Jesus Christ. According to Gibbs and Bolger, this results "in a change of focus from the Epistles to the Gospels as a way to understanding Jesus more profoundly."<sup>31</sup> Such a change is important for ECM because of its insistence that "the

church is the continuation of the presence of Jesus in and to the world.”<sup>32</sup> In this regard, it is no surprise to discover that a favorite term used by those within ECM is “incarnational.” The church is incarnational insofar as it is a community of people seeking to live the life of Jesus as described in the Word of God, especially in the Gospels.

ECM believes that this understanding of the Word of God as the foundation of the community of Jesus is antithetical to the modern evangelical understanding. According to ECM, the modern evangelical church views the Word of God as a sourcebook of facts used to develop an individualistic and propositional Christianity. For this reason, ECM charges that modern evangelicals utilize the Bible as something to be preached rather than something to be lived.

In addition to this affirmation of the church as the community of Jesus, ECM’s ecclesiological discussions include the mission of the church. With evangelicals, ECM also regards the church as God’s vehicle for accomplishing God’s mission in the world, and the postmodern West in particular. Here ECM can be compared to the Missional Church movement, according to which “it is by now a truism to speak of North America as a mission field.”<sup>33</sup> ECM has given heavy emphasis to the mission of the church. For this reason, its understanding of this mission must be discussed in greater detail.

### ECM’s Missional Ecclesiology

ECM insists that the very nature of the church is mission. The church is the people of God sent on a mission; engaging in that mission is their primary activity. For this reason, the expression “missional ecclesiology” is appropriate to apply to this understanding. More specifically, ECM maintains that the mission of the church is to promote the community of Jesus among all people so that they may experience the “kingdom of God” in their present lives. For ECM, the kingdom of God is not only *related* to the mission, but the kingdom of God *is* the mission. It is the mission because the kingdom of God is the gospel. Through the recent scholarship of N.T. Wright and a renewed focus on the Gospels rather than the Pauline epistles, ECM claims that it has rediscovered a revolutionary gospel.

In Jesus, they [emerging churches] discovered a long-forgotten gospel, the idea that we have an invitation to participate with God in the redemption of the world. Emerging churches accepted this offer, and they joined the *missio Dei*, God’s outward movement to humanity. Jesus announced the kingdom of God, and this is the message emerging churches seek to proclaim in their newly formed missional communities.<sup>34</sup>

Brian McLaren makes this connection abundantly clear: “‘Mission of God’ is a metaphor for the kingdom of God.”<sup>35</sup>

ECM claims that the church throughout the ages, particularly in the modern era, has failed to grasp the true meaning of the kingdom of God. McLaren lists at least eight reasons why this is, including “the early church’s divorce from Jewish roots,” its “marriage with Constantine’s empire,” and “alliances with the secular state.”<sup>36</sup> But while most of the church has failed to grasp the kingdom of God, McLaren believes that he and ECM are “right on the verge of it.”<sup>37</sup> ECM is convinced that this recovered understanding will change the course of the church and enable it to successfully accomplish its mission in the postmodern era. But how does ECM grasp the meaning of the kingdom of God?

*What the kingdom is not.* Much of ECM’s discussion of the kingdom of God seems more interested in pointing out how the modern evangelical church has misunderstood the kingdom than in stating positively what that kingdom is. The kingdom of God is not atonement for sin,<sup>38</sup> salvation,<sup>39</sup> church,<sup>40</sup> future,<sup>41</sup> heaven after death,<sup>42</sup> or even Christianity itself.<sup>43</sup> ECM is concerned to correct these perceived misconceptions.

*The kingdom is present.* One of the primary complaints voiced by ECM against the modern evangelical church is that it has emphasized salvation in terms of a future promise rather than a present reality. According to McLaren, modern evangelicals proclaim a gospel of forgiveness from sin resulting in an eternity in heaven. In other words, the application of redemption is primarily a future application. However, McLaren and ECM believe that a renewed emphasis on the kingdom corrects this exaggerated focus on the future. “Here’s the scandal: not just that Jesus speaks of the new kingdom...but that he says the kingdom is *at hand*, available to be grasped, knocking at the door – not just someday in the future, but *here and now*. Here and now!”<sup>44</sup> So strong is this emphasis on the kingdom of God as a present reality that some within ECM have posited that its antithesis, hell, is a present reality as well. Rob Bell believes “poverty, injustice, suffering – they are all hells on earth, and as Christians we oppose them with all our energies.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, both heaven and hell are kingdom realms that are present today.

*The kingdom is bigger than the church.* Many ECM leaders believe that the modern church made the mistake of making the church the center of God’s intentions; but “the church is not necessarily the center of God’s intentions. God is working in the world, and the church has the option to join God or not.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, according to ECM, the mission of the church is not about promoting the church because Jesus’ “gospel was a gospel of the kingdom of God, not of the church.”<sup>47</sup> The mission of the church is the promotion of the kingdom of God and the transformation of the entire world, including the church.

*The kingdom is everyday life and social transformation.* Because the kingdom of God is larger than the church, it is larger than individual redemption. As Gibbs and Bolger summarize, “the gospel of emerging churches is not confined to personal salvation.”<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, ECM holds that the kingdom of God is larger than religion or spirituality because “in the original workplace – the habitat of humans – there was no polarity or tension between the sacred and the profane but only between God and the created order.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, ECM maintains that the kingdom of God is a manner of living that Ray Anderson calls a “secular sacrament.”<sup>50</sup> This secular sacrament of the kingdom of God involves living life in the manner intended by God, but does not necessarily include personal salvation in the process. ECM proponent Brad Cecil summarizes his church’s mission:

Access is missional but *not* in the sense that we are trying to save all the individuals we are engaged with in the culture so that the kingdom will advance and Christ can work. Instead, we are trying to make our community a place where you can feel the kingdom of God, and we don’t think we need to save everyone for this to happen.<sup>51</sup>

Emerging churches focus on changed lives rather than changed beliefs. People do not want to be converted, but experiencing the life of the kingdom may be welcomed by many. The focus is to create cultures of the kingdom and to allow God to do the work.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, the mission of God’s people is to be a kingdom blessing to the world, not necessarily a soteriological blessing.

*The kingdom is inclusive.* Perhaps the most important mark of the kingdom of God is its inclusivity. As McLaren emphasizes, “Jesus’ secret message in word and deed makes clear that the kingdom of God will be radically, scandalously inclusive.”<sup>53</sup> This inclusiveness may be described from at least three angles. First, “Many pioneers of emerging church groan at the idea of strict membership criteria. They fear that rigid boundaries will produce a ‘them and us’ attitude, which cuts church off from non-believers. They prefer an ‘open source’ church, which crashes through the boundaries between one person and another.”<sup>54</sup> Feeling that exclusion and conformity are values of the modern era, ECM seeks to eliminate such boundaries. The emphasis on inclusiveness leads to the common ECM practice of belonging before believing. ECM believes that perhaps the most powerful way to reveal the kingdom of God and help people participate in the kingdom of God is to *allow* them to participate in the kingdom of God.

Second, the kingdom of God involves following God wherever he may be found, particularly outside the confines of the institutional church. Doug Pagitt states this explicitly when he says, “my presupposition is that the gospel calls us to participate in the things of God wherever we find them.”<sup>55</sup> Since “the church, or self-professing Christians, holds no special right to speak for God,” ECM seeks to find and develop the kingdom anywhere in God’s creation.<sup>56</sup> In fact, ECM insists that seeking God’s truth in other places is an integral part of evangelism.

Third, inclusiveness leads ECM to embrace other religions. Because the mission of the kingdom of God is more about social transformation than personal salvation, ECM is very open to peoples of other faiths. "They include both Christians and non-Christians in the same groups. This avoidance of differentiation is another common characteristic of emerging churches. They do not want to create 'us.' and 'them' distinctions, which they feel would be both discriminatory and destructive to group participation."<sup>57</sup> Gibbs and Bolger studied several emerging churches which illustrate this view, including Apex in Las Vegas: "My pagan friends are church for me as well. While with them, I spend time with Jesus because he is with me. My community with these Las Vegas actors is just as strong as my Christian community, and I am slowly introducing Jesus to them."<sup>58</sup> This illustrates a feature central to ECM's understanding of the kingdom of God: "there is no salvation outside of Christ, but there is salvation outside of Christianity."<sup>59</sup>

Because of this emphasis on inclusiveness, ECM leaders and proponents have been accused of promoting a veiled form of soteriological universalism. Unfortunately, this is an accusation that has been leveled against an entire movement without taking into consideration the diversity of voices and theologies within that movement. For example, many agree with Dan Kimball who explicitly states, "If you raised the common question, 'Do all religions lead to God?' I would say no."<sup>60</sup> Others offer the more guarded view of Karen Ward: "I affirm no other Savior than Jesus Christ, yet at the same time, I feel no need to know with certainty the final destination of those of other faiths who either have no knowledge of Christ or who do not accept the Christian claims of the atonement."<sup>61</sup> Ward's unwillingness to answer this question with certainty can be seen to relate to ECM's rejection of foundationalism and its belief that it is not possible to know things with absolute certainty. On the other hand, others seem to have moved to the position of soteriological universalism. Spencer Burke, who claims to be "a universalist who believes in hell" states, "When I say I'm a universalist, what I really mean is that I don't believe you have to convert to any particular religion to find God. As I see it, God finds us, and it has nothing to do with subscribing to any particular religious view."<sup>62</sup> In this context Burke is arguing against institutionalized religion rather than for universalism, but his theology of "we are already in unless we want to be out" certainly implies a soteriological universalism.<sup>63</sup>

### **ECM's Practical Ecclesiology**

ECM's understanding of the kingdom of God reveals a preference for orthopraxy to orthodoxy. Karen Ward summarizes this point well: "We do not possess truth or seek to correct the truths of others, but we seek to live faithfully in light of the truth of God in Jesus Christ."<sup>64</sup> More specifically, rather than developing its ecclesiology from what it considers to be right beliefs, ECM develops it from what it considers to be effective practice. ECM's practical ecclesiology is ultimately driven by its rejection of the modern and its understanding of the postmodern turn. ECM's practical ecclesiology is

antithetical to the modern seeker-sensitive movement. Its primary complaint against the seeker-sensitive movement, and modern evangelicalism generally, is that it is market-driven rather than mission-driven. That is, many seeker-sensitive churches base their practice on how to attract a consumer rather than on how to accomplish a mission. Arising out of this market-driven approach is the tendency of modern churches simply to take the latest church success story or “how-to” and attempt to apply it to their own context. McLaren acknowledges that seeker-sensitive church leaders like Hybels were visionaries within the modern era, but he laments when other churches imitated their style without their vision because they “violated the very process that made [those leaders] successful.”<sup>65</sup> ECM rejects both a market-driven ecclesiology and a “how-to” ecclesiology that can be transferred from one church to another, proposing instead a mission-driven ecclesiology. ECM claims that it is this mission-driven mentality that drives its practical ecclesiology because “the emerging church is more of a mindset than a model”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, “there is no single model for the emerging church” but “hundreds and thousands” of methods.<sup>67</sup> But, these disclaimers notwithstanding, ECM literature is very unified in its understanding of the various components of practical ecclesiology. Those components can be examined under the following headings: leadership, preaching and teaching, evangelism, and worship.

*Leadership.* Many within ECM believe that the modern church inappropriately redefined church leadership. For example, Dan Kimball grieves that modern evangelical church leaders often act like corporate managers rather than spiritual leaders.<sup>68</sup> Spencer Burke is more explicit in his analysis: “...we need a new leadership paradigm. Our present model doesn’t seem to have much in common with Scripture. It doesn’t match Jesus Christ or any other biblical ‘great.’”<sup>69</sup> He believes the modern church leader is often a “tour guide” who believes his “job is to tell you exactly what to do,” or a “hero” who believes “I should be a model for others.”<sup>70</sup> This ecclesiological leadership, ECM believes is a result of modern quest for power and control.

ECM believes that a change in leadership is necessary for the church to experience the kingdom of God. “For the church to resemble the kingdom of God, current notions of church power must be drastically altered.”<sup>71</sup> Gibbs and Bolger report that ECM “roots normative forms of leadership in the Trinity,” which is understood as a “community of mutually inclusive and serving components of God.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, “Emerging churches, in their attempts to resemble the kingdom, avoid all types of control in their leadership formation. Leadership has shifted to a more facilitative role as emerging churches have experimented with the idea of leaderless groups. The leader’s role in such groups is to create a space for activities to occur.”<sup>73</sup> This type of leadership flattens the typical modern hierarchy and creates a community in which “all members help make decisions and take turns leading, actions that serve as a counter to the control and oppressive tendencies of modernity.”<sup>74</sup>

*Preaching and Teaching.* The communication of the modern church is intimately related to the previously described hallmarks of the modern era. Therefore, ECM's primary complaint against the modern evangelical church's communication is that it is too rationalistic and individualistic. This is evident in segmented and age-oriented education programs as well as monologue teaching in the pulpit and the classroom. ECM believes modern communication involves an "explanation of what truth is" that is "communicated primarily with words."<sup>75</sup> A related concern that many ECM practitioners have concerning modern communication is that it does not allow room for questioning and doubt. Rather than allowing doubt, ECM maintains that modern communication only focuses on providing answers.

In contrast to modern evangelical communication, ECM proposes a different form of communication. Spencer Burke applies the metaphor of "facilitator" to capture the essence of this form.<sup>76</sup> Basically, the church must communicate in a manner that is "short on sermons, long on conversations; short on answers, long on questions; short on abstractions and propositions, long on stories and parables; short on telling you what to think, long on challenging you to think for yourself; short on condemning the irreligious, long on confronting the religious."<sup>77</sup> This change in communication is essential, McLaren believes, for the postmodern culture to hear and receive the gospel.

Doug Pagitt provides a specific example of ECM's proposed format for preaching and teaching. He insists that the modern sermon does not work because it is driven by power, control, and pastoral authority.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, according to Pagitt, the modern sermon "suffers from a relationship problem" because the authoritative pastor is a stranger to his congregation.<sup>79</sup> Pagitt uses various phrases to characterize the modern sermon, including "an act of relational violence," "hurts community," "dehumanizing," and "violating."<sup>80</sup> In place of the modern sermon, Pagitt practices and promotes a view of preaching he calls "progressional dialogue."<sup>81</sup> A progressional dialogue is relationship-centered. Its content is created by relationships, both before and during its actual delivery, and becomes "a socializing force and formative practice in a community."<sup>82</sup> The result of the progressional dialogue, according to Pagitt, is that the community benefits by having access to the truth that all community members provide and that the Bible itself becomes a part of the community, rather than simply an authoritative rulebook.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to redefining preaching, ECM practitioners are constantly seeking effective methods of communication. For many, these methods represent a return to more historic and liturgical forms of communication. For example, Tony Jones practices and promotes a revised form of confirmation and other participatory practices such as *Lectio Divina* and *The Labyrinth*.<sup>84</sup>

*Evangelism.* ECM believes "traditional apologetics offer a reductionistic approach to God, ignoring Christians' spiritual and communal way of living in favor of a cognitive

approach to truth.”<sup>85</sup> That is, modern evangelical evangelism only emphasizes the cognitive aspects of conversion by focusing on a set of propositions taken from the Bible that must be accepted or denied, while attempting to resolve any apparent contradictions or complaints that may arise in the process. ECM views this form of evangelism as a “win-lose argument.”<sup>86</sup> Perhaps the most thorough description of ECM’s view of modern evangelism is found in Brian McLaren’s *More Ready Than You Realize*:

On the street, evangelism is equated with pressure. It means selling God as if God were vinyl siding, replacement windows, or a mortgage refinancing service. It means shoving your ideas down someone’s throat, threatening him with hell if he does not capitulate to your logic or Scripture-quoting. It means excluding everyone from God’s grace except those who agree with the evangelizer (a.k.a. evangelist). When preceded by the word television, the word evangelism grows even darker, more sinister – sleazy even. It means rehearsed, mechanical monologues, sales pitches, spiels, unrequested sermons or lectures, crocodile tears, uncomfortable confrontations sometimes made worse by Nutrasweet smiles and over-done eye contact and too-sincere professions of love for one’s soul and concern for one’s eternal destiny.<sup>87</sup>

ECM practices and promotes an evangelism that is quite different. ECM relates the purpose of evangelism to its understanding of the kingdom of God: “Emerging churches focus on changed lives rather than changed beliefs. People do not want to be converted, but experiencing the life of the kingdom may be welcomed by many. The focus is to create cultures of the kingdom and to allow God to do the work.”<sup>88</sup> Because of this purpose, the methodology commonly employed is significantly different from what is described above. Again, an extended quote from *More Ready Than You Realize* provides an overview of typical ECM evangelism.

Good evangelism is the process of being friendly without discrimination and influencing all of one’s friends toward better living, through good deeds and good conversations. For a Christian like myself, evangelism means engaging in these conversations in the spirit of Jesus Christ... If you know anything about Jesus at all, you probably know that he was an amazing conversationalist.<sup>89</sup>

*Worship.* For many within ECM, the large megachurch worship gathering is the epitome of the modern, seeker-sensitive, market-driven church. This church embraces several values:

[W]orship “services” in which preaching, music, programs, etc. are *served* to the attendee... services designed to reach those who have had bad or boring experiences in the church... services designed to be user-friendly and contemporary... crosses and other symbols removed from meeting place to avoid looking too ‘religious’... uses modern technology to communicate with a contemporary flare... (and) services designed to grow to accommodate the many people of the church.<sup>90</sup>

Although Kimball acknowledges that modern worship services “neither are right or wrong, they are simply different values for different mindsets,” it is clear that he and others within ECM view modern worship as something that is holding the church back from ministering in the postmodern era.<sup>91</sup> Kimball concludes, “The changes in our culture are influencing emerging generations to crave a raw and vintage approach to Christianity and church. Therefore, contemporary seeker-sensitive methodology goes against what connects with them most deeply.”<sup>92</sup>

ECM has sought to embody postmodern worship in a variety of ways. Gibbs and Bolger note several congregations which have attempted to maintain a church with no corporate gathering. Those churches which have maintained a corporate gathering have attempted to redefine what such a gathering looks and feels like. Contrary to the sermon-centered worship gathering of the modern church, ECM asserts that “God communicated in a multisensory way and received multisensory worship. In the emerging church, we must revisit a holistic multisensory approach to worship, an approach which is biblical.”<sup>93</sup>

Kimball proposes several features that differentiate this form of worship from that of the modern church.<sup>94</sup> First, the sermon will no longer be the focal point of the service. Instead, the service might be designed around a theme from scripture, which comes to expression in music, art, message, and any number of other elements. Second, the service will engage all the senses. Rather than focusing merely on hearing through listening to a sermon, the service should include seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Third, the service will include members of all generations. Finally, the service will be participatory. Church should not be a spectator sport, but everyone should have an opportunity to participate. Such a service would communicate to the postmodern values that are post-rationalistic, post-individualistic, and post-dualistic.

### **Personal Critique**

Whether ECM is accomplishing its ecclesiological revolution remains open to debate. But whatever ECM has accomplished to date, it has certainly promoted the debate surrounding Christianity and the postmodern turn. ECM is a voice that is challenging the worldwide church to carefully consider its message, mission, and methods for the twenty-first century. The church should be grateful to ECM for this reason alone. However, any time a movement challenges the status quo, both criticism and praise will follow. My essay is no exception. ECM leaders have expressed their appreciation for criticism as it continues to sharpen them in their ongoing conversation.<sup>95</sup> To help advance the conversation, I offer the following critique of ECM’s proposed ecclesiology.

*The danger of misrepresentation.* Any movement that self-consciously reacts against another faces the danger of misrepresentation. ECM faces this danger in two ways:

misrepresenting (1) the modern and postmodern and (2) the practical ecclesiology of the modern church.

First, ECM presents both the modern and the postmodern eras as monolithic and, therefore, as “absolute antithesis” to one another.<sup>96</sup> For example, Jones, Kimball, and Sweet believe that moderns value the rational while postmoderns value the experiential.<sup>97</sup> It often seems as if these authors believe that no moderns value any form of experience and no postmoderns value any form of reason. But what might the two eras share in common? For example, it is difficult to see how the postmodern era in the United States is any less consumeristic than the modern era.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, ECM often does not take into consideration the diversity found within each era and, as a result, creates an analysis that is “so stylized and reductionistic as to represent a major historical distortion.”<sup>99</sup> In this regard, ECM seldom considers that the beginning of the twenty-first century may represent a *transition* from modernity to postmodernity, so that both worldviews are present at the same time. ECM gives the general impression that the modern era is dead and gone, and a brand new era has arrived in its place. Since ECM sees an appropriate response to postmodernity as the greatest need today, misrepresenting the modern and postmodern era poses a grave danger to the responses proposed for meeting this need.

Second, ECM risks misrepresenting the modern church’s practical ecclesiology. It claims that the modern church has lost its mission or, more dramatically, forgotten why it exists.<sup>100</sup> This accusation is most commonly leveled against the megachurch movement. However, any brief analysis of this movement will reveal that it has a well-defined mission that is clearly aimed at reaching those who do not know Christ. Even Os Guinness, one of the strongest critics of the megachurches, recognizes the fact that most of them are passionate about the proclaiming Christ to the world.<sup>101</sup>

In this perspective, ECM risks misrepresenting itself when it distinguishes itself from the modern movements it opposes. Gibbs and Bolger’s anecdotal *Emerging Churches* outlines nine characteristics that define an Emerging Church. The three major characteristics include: “identify with the life of Jesus,” “transform the secular realm,” and “live highly communal lives.”<sup>102</sup> From these three can be deduced several minor ones, including “welcome the stranger” and “serve with generosity.”<sup>103</sup> Throughout their survey, Gibbs and Bolger quote ECM leaders who believe that these characteristics are unique to ECM. For example, one leader states his church “looks to communicate the gospel in language that both they and their hearers understand in the context of a world they both share.”<sup>104</sup> Another church leader speaks of playing “secular” music so that “church resembles the rest of their lives.”<sup>105</sup> The author’s conclusion is that “emerging churches retrieve the life of Jesus as a reference point.”<sup>106</sup> But even a scant analysis will reveal that these same considerations were at the foundation of the seeker-sensitive movement.

Ironically, ECM is further related to these movements in how it promotes itself. Recall that one of its major concerns is that modern churches, adopting the mindset of consumerism, simply took the latest church success story or “how-to” and attempted to apply it to their own context. According to ECM, imitation does not work in a postmodern culture because of the desire for authenticity and the rapid rate of cultural change. For this reason, leaders like Jones and Kimball often begin with not-so-subtle disclaimers: “Sorry. No models inside,” or “There is no single model for the emerging church.”<sup>107</sup> However, many of these same leaders then proceed to outline how their church is structured in great detail. Kimball, for example, devotes over half of *The Emerging Church* to detailing how he constructed a church for postmoderns, complete with diagrams of a worship gathering and detailed teaching topics.<sup>108</sup> If this were not enough, a year later he published *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations*, a 230-page book that includes chapters such as “What Is an Emerging Worship Service Gathering,” and “First Steps Toward Starting a New Worship Gathering,” to “Planning and Creating Multisensory Worship Gatherings,” and “Creating Life-Stage Worship Gatherings.”<sup>109</sup> When this is combined with preaching books such as Doug Pagitt’s *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*, evangelism books such as Brian McLaren’s *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix*, spiritual practice books such as Tony Jones’ *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* and *Divine Intervention: Encountering God through the Ancient Practice of Lectio Divina*, and leadership books such as Brian McLaren’s *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* which contains twelve strategies for church leaders, it is difficult to imagine that churches won’t imitate ECM’s methods.<sup>110</sup> Although this danger is readily admitted, the vast amount of literature coming from ECM often reads similar to the “how-to” manuals of the modern era, thus encouraging others to apply their strategies. In these ways then ECM is, at best, ignorant and, at worst, arrogant to claim itself as distinct from the modern churches.

ECM’s tendency to overstate and misrepresent modern ecclesiology extends to its criticisms of modern views of the kingdom of God. McLaren outlines eight reasons why the historic church has misunderstood the kingdom of God.<sup>111</sup> Contrary to the rest of the church, McLaren believes that he is “right on the verge” of retrieving a correct understanding of the kingdom of God.<sup>112</sup> On many points, I say “Amen” to what McLaren and the rest of ECM say about the kingdom of God. However, I have two concerns regarding ECM’s understanding of the kingdom of God. First, I’m not convinced that this understanding was ever lost by the church. Second, if it was, I’m not sure that the church should recover everything ECM teaches about it.

When ECM seeks to correct the modern evangelical understanding of the kingdom of God, it emphasizes that the kingdom of God is not atonement for sin, salvation, church, future, heaven after death, or even Christianity itself. In my former years as a classical dispensationalist, I would have been outraged by such claims. I would have claimed

that the kingdom of God is exactly equivalent to these things. However, when I broadened my reading and studies beyond classical dispensationalism, I came to many of the same conclusions that ECM proposes today. For example, George Eldon Ladd helped me understand that the kingdom of God is not equivalent to the church and that the kingdom of God is both present and future.<sup>113</sup> But more than anyone, Mike Wittmer introduced me to the rich tradition of Reformed theology and its balanced understanding of the kingdom of God in creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.<sup>114</sup> While it is true that many evangelical churches and some popular authors continue to promote an understanding of the kingdom of God that resembles that of classical dispensationalism, ECM is incorrect in stating that its understanding of the kingdom of God is new. This is yet another example of ECM leaders and practitioners narrowly focusing on modern fundamentalism which causes them to overstate and mischaracterize so much of the Church.

Although ECM's understanding of the kingdom of God was never lost, some aspects of it should be. Specifically, ECM's emphasis on social transformation and radical inclusion tends to overlook the redemptive aspect of the kingdom of God. It is not that redemption does not lead to social transformation. It most certainly does. Christians must always promote social transformation for all just as God extends his common grace to all. But real and lasting social transformation is a result of individuals and communities entering the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ, not simply through changed behavior. And it is not that the kingdom of God is not inclusive. The life of Jesus clearly demonstrates that the kingdom of God is available to all types of people, especially the overlooked and disenfranchised. Christians are commanded to love their neighbor, regardless of what this neighbor believes. But real and lasting inclusion is a result of peoples of all faiths, nationalities, and backgrounds entering the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, those without faith in Jesus Christ will be excluded from the kingdom of God, a fact that many within ECM seem to minimize.<sup>115</sup>

This essay has sought to understand the Emerging Church Movement, perhaps the most influential church movement in the twenty-first century to date. Specifically, it has sought to understand ECM's desire to bring about an ecclesial reformation through an examination of its proposed ecclesiology. The ecclesiology of ECM is broadly evangelical. It is evangelical in the sense that it retains a commitment to the Bible as God's Word and, especially, the missional nature of the church. Its closest evangelical and ecclesiological relative is the Missional Church. However, what sets ECM apart from other evangelical ecclesiologies is its acceptance of the postmodern ethos. It becomes evident that much of its ecclesiology is not derived from theological concerns but from pragmatic concerns resulting from its own analysis of the postmodern era. For this reason, while ECM has challenged the church in many helpful ways, in my opinion ECM has unintentionally accommodated itself to the postmodern era just as some of its modern predecessors accommodated themselves to the modern era.

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<sup>1</sup> ECM will be used throughout this paper to refer to the Emerging Church in general and to those who do not specifically identify with the Emerging Church but share a similar understanding of ecclesiology, ministry, and culture. Furthermore, ECM is used in a much broader sense than the terms Emergent or Emergent Village. Therefore, when ECM is used, it should not be assumed that each and every individual within the Emerging Church agrees with the point being made, but that it seems to represent the majority opinion.

<sup>2</sup> David Van Biema, et al. "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America," *Time*, 7 February 2005, 45.

<sup>3</sup> Although Emergent Village is a formal organization, it should be considered a branch of ECM, not ECM as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 16.

<sup>5</sup> Andy Crouch, "The Emergent Mystique," *Christianity Today*, November 2004, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Tony Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties Books, 2001), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 15.

<sup>8</sup> For examples on the following discussion of postmodernity, see Spencer Burke, *Making Sense of Church: Eavesdropping on Emerging Conversations about God, Community, and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*; Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*; Brian D. McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002); Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds., *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007); Leonard Sweet, *Carpe Mañana: Is Your Church Ready to SEIZE TOMORROW?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001); and Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 169.

<sup>10</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 193.

<sup>11</sup> Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 169.

<sup>13</sup> Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 169.

<sup>14</sup> See Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 47.

<sup>15</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 167.

<sup>16</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 196.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, "Participating in What Frees: The Concept of Truth in the Postmodern Context," *Review and Expositor* 100 (Fall 2003): 692.

<sup>18</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 196.

<sup>19</sup> Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 171.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community In Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 66.

<sup>22</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 159-170.

<sup>23</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 171-188.

<sup>24</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 189.

<sup>25</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Roger Olson, "Does Evangelical Theology Have a Future?" *Christianity Today* (February 9, 1998): 41.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Hindmarsh, "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective," in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 31.

<sup>28</sup> D. A. Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz's *Renewing the Center*" in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation In Postmodern Times*, eds. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, 33-58 (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 52.

<sup>29</sup> What distinguishes evangelicalism from traditional Reformed ecclesiology is that it does not emphasize the administration of the sacraments or discipline as additional marks of the church.

<sup>30</sup> The Lausanne Covenant (1974).

<sup>31</sup> *Emerging Churches*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 112.

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- <sup>33</sup> Darrell L Guder, "Missional Church: From Sending to Being Sent," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Darrell L. Guder ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2.
- <sup>34</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 64.
- <sup>35</sup> Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2006), 143.
- <sup>36</sup> McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 211-214.
- <sup>37</sup> McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, xiv.
- <sup>38</sup> See McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 91.
- <sup>39</sup> See Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 63, 91, 128-129.
- <sup>40</sup> See Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 111 and Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 42 and 95.
- <sup>41</sup> See McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 24.
- <sup>42</sup> See McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 14 and 184.
- <sup>43</sup> Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a missional evangelical, post/protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/Calvinist, anabaptist/anglican, methodist, catholic, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 282.
- <sup>44</sup> McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 24.
- <sup>45</sup> Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 148.
- <sup>46</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 27.
- <sup>47</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology*, 111.
- <sup>48</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 63.
- <sup>49</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology*, 103.
- <sup>50</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology*, 104-105.
- <sup>51</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 129. See also 257-258.
- <sup>52</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 128-129.
- <sup>53</sup> McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 94.
- <sup>54</sup> Michael Moynagh, *emergingchurch.intro* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2005), 147.
- <sup>55</sup> Doug Pagitt, "The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, Robert Webber, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 131.
- <sup>56</sup> Pagitt, "The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology," 133.
- <sup>57</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 109.
- <sup>58</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 108.
- <sup>59</sup> Samir Selmanovic, "The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness: Finding Our God in the Other," in *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 195.
- <sup>60</sup> Dan Kimball, "The Emerging Church and Missional Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, Robert Webber, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 101.
- <sup>61</sup> Karen Ward, "Response to Mark Driscoll," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, Robert Webber, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 46.
- <sup>62</sup> Spencer Burke and Barry Taylor, *A Heretics Guide to Eternity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) 196, 197.
- <sup>63</sup> Burke, *A Heretics Guide to Eternity*, 61.
- <sup>64</sup> Karen Ward, "The Emerging Church and Communal Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, Robert Webber, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 179.
- <sup>65</sup> McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 111.
- <sup>66</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 14.
- <sup>67</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 14.
- <sup>68</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 105-106, 127, 134, 229-23.
- <sup>69</sup> Burke, *Making Sense of Church*, 39.
- <sup>70</sup> Burke, *Making Sense of Church*, 46, 81.
- <sup>71</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 193.
- <sup>72</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 194.
- <sup>73</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 192.
- <sup>74</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 194.
- <sup>75</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 175.
- <sup>76</sup> Burke, *Making Sense of Church*, 51-66.
- <sup>77</sup> McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 15.

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- <sup>78</sup> See Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 123-131, 140-146.
- <sup>79</sup> Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 21. See also the many other references to the preacher as a stranger to the congregation in *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 32, 82, 88-94, 147, 155.
- <sup>80</sup> Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 26, 49, 76, 82.
- <sup>81</sup> Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 23.
- <sup>82</sup> Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 25.
- <sup>83</sup> See Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 42-44.
- <sup>84</sup> See Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*, 177-193. See also Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).
- <sup>85</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 124.
- <sup>86</sup> McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 25-29.
- <sup>87</sup> McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 12-13.
- <sup>88</sup> Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 128-129.
- <sup>89</sup> McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 15.
- <sup>90</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 105.
- <sup>91</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 104.
- <sup>92</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 36.
- <sup>93</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 129.
- <sup>94</sup> The following descriptions are taken from Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 122-155.
- <sup>95</sup> Tony Jones, et al., "A Response to Recent Criticism," <http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000429.html>, accessed 10 December 2006.
- <sup>96</sup> D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 129.
- <sup>97</sup> See Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 44; Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*, 30-31; Sweet, *Carpe Mañana*, 33.
- <sup>98</sup> See McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 196.
- <sup>99</sup> Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 60.
- <sup>100</sup> See Gibbs and Bolger *Emerging Churches*, 19, 63-64.
- <sup>101</sup> See Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 22.
- <sup>102</sup> *Emerging Churches*, 45.
- <sup>103</sup> Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 45.
- <sup>104</sup> Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 77.
- <sup>105</sup> Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 71.
- <sup>106</sup> Gibbs, *Emerging Churches*, 64.
- <sup>107</sup> Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry*, 12; Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 14.
- <sup>108</sup> See Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 101-261.
- <sup>109</sup> Dan Kimball, *Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations*, with forewords by David Crowder and Sally Morgenthaler (El Cajon, CA: emergentYS, 2004), iii.
- <sup>110</sup> Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Brian D. McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002); Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Brian McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).
- <sup>111</sup> McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 209-218.
- <sup>112</sup> McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, xiv.
- <sup>113</sup> For example, see George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) and George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).
- <sup>114</sup> Mike challenged me to read historical theology and modern authors such as Anthony Hoekema, Abraham Kuyper, Richard Mouw, and Al Wolters. My personal favorite remains Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).
- <sup>115</sup> It is likely that one of the reasons ECM minimizes this is because ECM generally minimizes human sin. Very few ECM books discuss the sinfulness of humanity to any great extent and most seem to deemphasize the substitutionary atonement of Christ as the means of overcoming this sin.