

John S. Bohannon. *Preaching and the Emerging Church: An Examination of Four Founding Leaders: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt*. Lexington, KY: CreateSpace, 2010. 318 pages. \$18.95.

Bohannon is cofounder and preaching pastor of Water's Edge Community Church, a church plant in Lake Country, Virginia. He received his doctorate in preaching from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also teaches preaching as a part-time instructor. This volume represents the fruit of his dissertation research.

In this volume, Bohannon functions as an outsider who is seeking to enter the emergent conversation. He states in the preface that he was first introduced to the emergent movement after reading Dan Kimball's *The Emergent Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. This sparked a desire to understand this new movement, especially as Bohannon was considering church planting. Over the next two years, Bohannon "spent countless hours reading thousands of pages of emerging church literature, blogs, and websites, attending emerging church conferences, and listening to sermons, lectures, and conversations from four of the most colorful and sometimes controversial emerging church leaders" (12). What he presents in the following chapters is his evaluation and critique of the four major emergent leaders—Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll. Following the opening chapter, in which Bohannon discusses the explosive arrival of the emerging church, he divides the remainder of the book into three major sections—analysis of the overall movement; analysis of the selected leaders; and evaluation and critique of their conceptions of the Bible, theology, and homiletics. In Chapter Two, Bohannon develops a profile of the emerging church movement based largely on the writings of the four major leaders and *Emerging Churches* by Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger. In Chapter Three, he profiles the four major leaders, noting how they became involved with the emerging church movement. In section two (Chapters Four through Eight), Bohannon provides a more in-depth analysis of each of the leaders, focusing on their concept of message (the authority of the Bible in each preacher's view), mentality (their philosophy of preaching), and method (their practical homiletic). He concludes this section with a comparative analysis of the message, mentality and method of each leader. In the third and final section, the author compares and contrasts the four leaders by grouping them based on message, mentality and method (McLaren and Pagitt; Kimball and Driscoll) and then contrasting the two groups against each other. His purpose in doing so is to display the two major streams of thought and practice that is developing within the emerging church movement (revisionists and relevants). His concluding chapter sums up what has preceded it.

I approached this book with anticipation. Yet, that does not mean that this volume is without some limitations. First, there is a professional issue. Bohannon stated that, in order to keep this work conversationally relevant, he opted to release it in dissertation form rather than go through the traditional editorial process (13). As a result, there are a number of technical issues, such as formatting, typographical errors and misidentifying authors and their works throughout the volume. Second, although it appears to be a well-researched volume, the majority of the author's reactant research comes solely from his own theological tradition. As a result, he uses many names and works that were unfamiliar to this reviewer, and he also fails to include relevant partners from both sides of the emergent conversation (i.e., Tex Samples and Mark Miller). Third, his overall tone is more critical than conversant. There are aspects to the emerging church movement that need to be critiqued; however, I believe that it can be done with a spirit of grace and truth. Despite these concerns, there is merit to Bohannon's work. First, he brings four major

streams of emergent, homiletical thought into one source. As one who tries to stay current in the emerging conversation and also teaches a course on contemporary preaching styles, this book offers me a resource that is impossible to find elsewhere. Second, I did find Bohannon's paradigm of "message," "mentality," and "method" useful in comparing and contrasting the four major leaders (60). This paradigm will be useful to those of us who study new and innovative ways of preaching, especially those who come from the emerging church and missional movements. Although it comes with some reservations, I would recommend this book to the practical theologian who finds himself or herself in conversation with these movements.

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