

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

John S. Bohannon graduated from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was awarded his Ph.D. degree in 2009. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *Preaching and the Emerging Church: An Examination of Four Founding Leaders: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt—with Contemporary Implications for Evangelical Expository*, was published using *CreateSpace* in 2010. In 2003, Bohannon co-founded Water's Edge Community Church, in Lake Country, Virginia, with his church members and he continues to serve as pastor to that congregation.

The Introduction of the text (14–18) and Part One (20–59) explain the background of the paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism in the context of North America. Bohannon argues for various positive and negative influences of postmodernism on churches, and outlines the historical development of the Emerging Church Movement resulting from its impact. In the process, Bohannon introduces four key figures, Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll, who have been energetic activists, passionate preachers, pastors, and theologians, representing the Emerging Church Movement.

In Part Two, Bohannon analyzes the ways these four preachers understand the Bible and the Gospel, their respective preaching philosophies, and their respective preaching methodologies. In chapter eight, he summarizes much of this in very detailed tables (150–162).

In Part Three, the four preachers are divided up into two streams on the basis of their relative suitability to norms of evangelical expository preaching and biblical revelation which Bohannon brings to the table as part of his own personal evangelical faith and conservative theology. In chapter nine, Brian McLaren and Doug Pagitt are selected as *revisionists* while in chapter ten, Dan Kimball and Mark Driscoll are chosen as *relevants*. Bohannon identifies *revisionists* as the subjects of criticism and vigilance, undermining the truth of Bible and Gospel, the authority of preaching, and church's mission and evangelism towards the world. He evaluates *relevants* as models of a desirable alternative of preaching that develop theology, philosophy, and methodology for evangelical expository preaching in the context of postmodernism. From his perspective, these two categories signify two totally different perspectives in the Emerging Church Movement.

The contribution of Bohannon's book is considerable for understanding the relationship between these well-known preachers and the Emerging Church Movement. Each preacher is responding in particular ways to the paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism. Readers will also appreciate Bohannon's view that preaching, as a prophetic voice, should be inclusively focused on the world and must serve in the world for the purpose of the Reign of God: to stand in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, to advocate for justice, and to speak the truth in love. Many readers will find common cause with Bohannon's concern for the relationship between the gospel and culture and for the ways that it is possible to learn effective storytelling from some of these preachers.

Some readers, however, will find Bohannon's division of these preachers into two doctrinally calibrated categories unhelpful, and his assessment disappointing. His own assumptions are modernist: the absolute authority and inerrancy of the Bible, the unchangeable truth of the Gospels, and his preference for the roles of preachers as messengers or heralds (roles which jettison cultural and congregational analysis). The book also fails to acknowledge women

preachers in emerging congregations, and rapidly growing racially and ethnically diverse emerging congregations. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge and respect Bohannon's efforts in exhaustively analyzing and pointing out the similarities and differences between these four key preachers in the Emerging Church Movement in the U.S.

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