Evangelism and the Emergent Church Movement

PPT

Jordan P Ballard
What is the Emergent Church?

- The Emergent Church Movement is an offshoot of evangelical Christianity which seeks to reform or re-imagine Christianity in light of postmodern philosophy in order to reach an emerging generation of postmodern twenty- and thirty-somethings which have largely become disconnected from evangelical churches.
What is the Emergent Church?

- “The specifically new forms of church life rising from the modern, American church of the twentieth century.” ~Tony Jones

- “communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern culture” ~Gibbs & Bolger

- “more of a conversation”
What is the Emergent Church?

CONVERSATION
Because the Pooling of Ignorance
Just Feels Better than Hard Truth
What is the Emergent Church?

- Use of candles in worship
- Return to ancient worship practices
- A pastor dressed in hip clothes
- Indie-rock music
- New styles of preaching
- Affinity for the arts
- Trendy images and lingo
What is the Emergent Church?

- Postmodern philosophy: deconstructionism + post-foundationalism
- Bible as narrative truth instead of propositional truth
- Beyond old categories of liberal and conservative
- Critical of evangelicalism
- Question traditional beliefs and practices
- “Everything must change” and “a new Christianity”
What is the Emergent Church?

Brian D. 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 + green + incarnational + depressed-yet-hopeful + emergent + unfinished CHRISTIAN

A New Kind of Christianity

Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith
What is the Emergent Church?

- Anti-Calvinist (but not Arminian)
- Egalitarian view of women in ministry/home
- *Cristus Victor* view of atonement
- Critical of dispensationalism (but not Covenantal)
- Critical of televangelists (but not opposed to using media)
- Liberal politics
What is the Emergent Church?

- Community
- Transformation
- Worship
- Social justice
- Hospitality as a spiritual discipline
- Concern for the poor
- Environmentalism
- Orthopraxy (right living) over orthodoxy (right believing)
- “The Way of Jesus”
The Younger Evangelicals

- Postmodern, post 9-11, new ministry paradigm
- Communicate through stories
- Grasp the power of imagination
- Value the arts, multiculturalism, and intergenerational ministries
- Ready to commit
The Younger Evangelicals

- Pursue what is authentic,
- See unity between thought and action
- Integration of evolutionary science with faith
- Reader-response hermeneutics
- Cosmic view of salvation
- Sacramental view of the ordinances
The Younger Evangelicals

- Apologetics is more incarnational than rational
- The Bible is an infallible book which takes us to Jesus rather than the inerrant foundation of truth.
- Evangelism avoids the “guilt-ridden motivational strategies” and instead seeks to evangelize through a lifestyle patterned by commitment to Jesus.
- People are drawn to the church and then come to Christ instead of the other way around.
Spiritual Heroes

- Mother Theresa
- Ghandi
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Bono
Post-Evangelical

- From propositional expressions of faith to relational stories about faith journeys
- From the authority of Scripture alone to a harmony between the authority of Scripture and other personal ways God mysteriously and graciously speaks to Christians
- From a theology that prepares people for death and the afterlife of a theology for life
- From a personal, individualistic, private faith to harmony between personal and community faith
Post-Evangelical

- From anti-Catholic and anti-nonprotestant perspectives to greater acceptance and curiosity about other approaches to knowing God
- From the church being a place where people take up space to the church as a mission outpost that sends people out
- From an approach to missions that emphasizes mass conversions by individuals to “share the good news with the whole world” approach
Post-Evangelical

- From arguing faith to the “dance of faith”
- From salvation by event to a journey of salvation
- From a salvation of humanity to a salvation of all creation
- From a Western, American understanding of the gospel to a worldwide view
- From motivating through fear to motivating through compassion, community, and hope
- From a search for dogmatic truth to a search for spiritual experience
Classifying the Emerging Church

- Emerging Evangelicals
- House-Church Evangelicals
- Emerging Reformers
- Emerging Liberals
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

- Objective Truth
- God and Gender
- How to Understand the Bible
- The Atonement of Christ
- Homosexuality
- Inclusivism
- Hell
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

• Progression of thinking from earlier writings to more recent writing (e.g., Bell, McLaren)
• Disagreements among emerging/emergents
• Ambiguity and equivocation on terminology

I also believe that God is active in the world right here and now. There is a God vibration that runs through everything God created. It is this vibration that runs throughout God’s story. Evangelism in the Inventive Age demands that we deliver the good news of God by finding the resonance between God’s story and the story playing out in each of us. This is what the first evangelists did when they wrote their Gospel proclamations. It’s what we are called to do today. ~Doug Pagitt
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

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“We must stay quite aware that there is no “clean” version of Christianity. All expressions of Christianity are culturally affected, and that is a good thing. Therefore, we must resist any temptation to say that one understanding of Christianity is more pure or closer to that of Jesus’. Post-evangelicals are not expressing better Christianity, only a more fitting one for their setting.”
"Drop any affair you may have with certainty, proof, argument – and replace it with dialogue, conversation, intrigue, and search."

~Brian McLaren
Objective Truth

Only two absolutes:

- Jesus’ crucifixion delivered us from sin.

- His resurrection assures us of eternal life.

“But that’s where the certainties end.”

~Tony Campolo
How would the Emergent view of objective truth change how we do evangelism?
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

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God and Gender

- McLaren’s apology & Campolo’s assertion

God is greater than any theology or system of ideas we come up with about God. God is not defined by our systems, by our theologies – not even by our firm convictions about him or her. Yes, or her – for God also transcends anything we think we know about masculinity and femininity.

Check your New Testament Greek: against the masculine God the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is referred to in the feminine gender. Even the Trinity defies the systematic packaging that theologies try to give it. Far from any individual’s theology being The Right One, in one sense all theologies are heresies . . . what you believe may be partly correct, but is certainly not completely correct (emphasis original). ~Tony Campolo
How would the Emergent view of God and gender change how we do evangelism?
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

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How to Understand the Bible

- Love for the Bible
- Neo-neo-orthodox view of Scripture

“To say that the Word (the message, meaning, or revelation) of God is in the biblical text, then, does not mean that you can extract verses or statements from the text at will and call them ‘God’s words.’ It means that if we enter the text together and feel the flow of its arguments, get stuck in its points of tension, and struggle with its unfolding plot in all its twists and turns, God’s revelation can happen to us.”
How to Understand the Bible

- Constitution vs. community library
- The Bible is a “stimulus to ongoing conversation.”

“Christians should neither put themselves under the text, as conservatives do, nor over the text, as liberals do. Christians should put themselves ‘in the text’ – in the conversation, in the story, in the current and flow, in the predicament, in the Spirit, in the community of people . . . .”

A New Kind of Christianity
Brian D. McLaren
TEN QUESTIONS THAT ARE TRANSFORMING THE FAITH
How to Understand the Bible

- What is the biblical storyline?
- Evangelicals storyline influenced by Greco-Roman thought
  - Six-line story
  - Theos vs. Elohim
  - Theos = “damnable idol”
- Three-line story
  - Genesis (Creation)
  - Exodus (Liberation)
  - Isaiah (Restoration/Kingdom)
How to Understand the Bible

- Progression of thought in the Bible
- Earlier stories (OT) more primitive and must be understood that way
- “The images of God that most resemble Jesus, whether they originate in the Bible or elsewhere, are the more mature and complete images.”
“Some emergent types [want] to recast Jesus as a limp-wrist hippie in a dress with a lot of product in his hair, who drank decaf and made pithy Zen statements about life while shopping for the perfect pair of shoes. In Revelation, Jesus is a prize fighter with a tattoo down his leg, a sword in his hand and the commitment to make someone bleed. That is a guy I can worship. I cannot worship the hippie, diaper, halo Christ because I cannot worship a guy I can beat up.”

~Mark Driscoll
How to Understand the Bible

- What about the violent return of Jesus (Revelation 19)?

- McLaren: not a violent image of Jesus
  - Blood is Jesus’ or the martyrs’
  - Sword = message of forgiveness and reconciliation

- “Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” ~Revelation 19:15-16
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

How would the Emergent view of the Bible change how we do evangelism?

*What is the biblical storyline in your evangelism?
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

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The Atonement of Christ

- Rejection of penal-substitutionary view of the atonement

“The fact is that the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse – a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence [sic] he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement ‘God is love.’ If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus’ own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil.”
A Better Atonement

Beyond the Depraved Doctrine of Original Sin

Tony Jones
The Atonement of Christ

- Penal-substitution is not the *only* aspect of Christ’s atonement.
  - Redemption (Eph 1:7)
  - Reconciliation (Rom 5:11)
  - Cosmic victory (1 Cor 15:55-57)
  - Example (John 15:13)

- Penal-substitution is the *major* aspect of Christ’s atonement.
  - Isa 53:4-6; Matt 8:17; 20:28; Luke 22:19-20; John 10:11; Rom 5:6, 8; 8:32; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 2:20; 3:13; Eph 5:2
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

How would the Emergent view of the atonement change how we do evangelism?
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Homosexuality

- Orientation vs. Behavior
  - Evangelicals: both are perverse/sinful
  - Moderate: only behavior sinful
  - Liberal: both are acceptable not sinful
  - Is orientation a choice?
  - Can orientation be changed?
Homosexuality

• Moderate view

“There must be good news for homosexuals. In the likelihood that their sexual orientations will not change, we must do more than simply bid them to be celibate: we must find ways for them to have fulfilling, loving experiences so that their humanity is affirmed and their participation in the body of Christ is ensured. Homosexuals are our brothers and sisters – and they must be treated that way. To do less is sin.”
Homosexuality

- Options for homosexual Christians
  - Homosexual “marriage” without behavior
  - Homosexual communities without behavior
Homosexuality

• McLaren’s five-year moratorium (2006)

• Bell’s recent statement

  “I am for marriage. I am for fidelity. I am for love, whether it's a man and woman, a woman and a woman, a man and a man. I think the ship has sailed and I think the church needs -- I think this is the world we are living in and we need to affirm people wherever they are.”  ~Rob Bell
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

How would the Emergent views of homosexuality change how we do evangelism?
Evangelical Resources

Correct, Not Politically Correct
How Same-Sex Marriage Hurts Everyone

A Queer Thing Happened to America
And what a long, strange trip it's been

Award-Winning Author
Frank Turek

Michael L. Brown
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

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“On [judgment] day . . . there will be a lot of surprises. Jesus said as much, and He may turn away some who said all the right things theologically by declaring, ‘I never knew you’ (Matt. 7:23). It also may be the case that many who never would have called themselves Christians were truly possessed by Christ and will be invited into the eternal kingdom.” ~Campolo
Inclusivism

- The Kingdom of God is wider than the Church

“The emerging church movement has come to believe that the ultimate context of spiritual aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ is not Christianity but rather the kingdom of God. . . . We do believe that God is best defined by the historical revelation in Jesus Christ, but to believe that God is limited to it would be an attempt to manage God. If one holds that Christ is confined to Christianity, one has chosen a god that is not sovereign.” ~Samir Selmanovic

*Seeds of Compassion Event (2008)*
Inclusivism

UNIVERSALISM

"A new kingdom is much bigger than a new religion, and in fact it has room for many religious traditions within it"

Brian McLaren, A New Kind of Christianity
“Burke’s community is prepared to learn from faith traditions outside the Christian fold. There is a Buddhist family in their church. As a community, the church visited a Buddhist temple. They participated in a guided meditation with this family. Burke celebrates the many ways God is revealed. He recognizes that the Spirit has been with these people all along. The community celebrates other traditions. They reach out to other traditions, and they see them as beloved children of God.” ~Gibbs & Bolger
Inclusivism

- McLaren and John 14:6
  - Does *not* teach exclusivity
  - “tribal, chauvinistic, exclusive, [and] elitist. . . .”
  - Twisted exegesis
  - Does not address other exclusivist verses (e.g., Acts 4:12)
How would the Emergent view of inclusivism change how we do evangelism?
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A BOOK ABOUT HEAVEN,
HELL, AND THE FATE OF EVERY
PERSON WHO EVER LIVED

LOVE WINS
• Rob Bell on Hell
  • Wide stream of thought in church history
  • NT does not teach *eternal* punishment (remedial)
  • Second chance in afterlife
  • God’s love eventually melts the hardest hearts (universalism)
  • Does not God get what He wants?
Hell

- Chan on Rob Bell on Hell
  - Uses *aion* instead of *aionios*
  - Matthew 25:46 – eternal for both
  - No Scripture for second chance
  - Universalism denies man’s freedom to reject God forever
Emergent Beliefs and Evangelism

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Classifying the Emerging Church

“[T]he emergent church is the latest version of liberalism. The only difference is that the old liberalism accommodated modernity and the new liberalism accommodates postmodernity.”
Emergent Church Evangelism

- Missional Evangelism
- Terminology
- The Kingdom of God
- Social Action
Emergent Church Evangelism

- Missional Evangelism
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Missional Evangelism

- “Life practice and embodiment of God’s redemptive work”
- Deemphasize evangelistic approaches
- More authenticity, fewer quick decisions
- Conversion is a process
- “Go to them”, not “Come to us.”
- All Christians are missionaries.
Missional Evangelism

The **old approach** sees evangelism “as sales pitch, as conquest, as warfare, as ultimatum, as threat, as proof, as argument, as entertainment, as show, as monologue, as something you have to do.”

The **new approach** sees “disciple-making as conversation, as friendship, as influence, as invitation, as companionship, as challenge, as opportunity, as conversation, as dance, as something you get to do.” ~Brian McLaren
Emergent Church Evangelism

What do you agree/disagree with?
What can we learn here?
Emergent Church Evangelism

- Missional Evangelism
- Terminology
- The Kingdom of God
- Social Action
Terminology

- Don’t use the term “lost” because it is negative.
- Don’t use unbiblical concepts.
  - “ask Jesus into your heart”
  - “accept Christ as your personal Savior”
  - Sinner’s prayer (cf. Luke 18:9-14)
- More than “going to heaven when you die”
  - Narcissistic view of salvation
  - Trivializes the life before death
Emergent Church Evangelism

What do you agree/disagree with?

What can we learn here?
Emergent Church Evangelism

• Missional Evangelism
• Terminology
• The Kingdom of God
• Social Action
The Kingdom of God

• The Kingdom of God is *now*.
  "God wants this kingdom to become established *on earth, now!*"  ~Campolo
  "God’s kingdom is a *new society* that Jesus wants to create *in this world* – within human history, not after the Second Coming or future apocalypse or anything else. But right now."  ~Campolo

• The Gospel is about restoration of the whole world.
The Kingdom of God

“I am a Christians because I believe that, in all these ways, Jesus is saving the world. By the “world” I mean planet Earth and all life on it, because left to ourselves, un-judged, un-forgiven, and un-taught, we will certainly destroy this planet and its residents.”
“Jesus wants to save us from making the good news about another world and not this one. Jesus wants to save us from preaching a gospel that is only about individuals and not about the systems that enslave them. Jesus wants to save us from shrinking the gospel down to a transaction about the removal of sin and not about every single particle of creation being reconciled to its maker.”
The Kingdom of God

- The Kingdom of God is larger than the church.
  - God is at work both inside and outside the church.
  - New form of postmillennialism or over-realized eschatology
  - Concern for social action like environmentalism (McLaren)

*My view: Kingdom is future*
Emergent Church Evangelism

What do you agree/disagree with?

What can we learn here?
Emergent Church Evangelism

- Missional Evangelism
- Terminology
- The Kingdom of God
- Social Action
Social Action

Six approaches to evangelism and social action
Social Action

1) **Mission = Evangelism = winning souls for eternity**

Social involvement is a betrayal of mission.

2) **Mission = Evangelism = soul winning**

Social action may be good. However, as a rule it distracts from mission and should be discouraged. Social action is optional.

3) **Mission/evangelism = soul winning**

Social action is important since it may draw people to Christ. Social ministries may act as forerunners to mission. Social action is fine as long as it makes it possible to confront people with the gospel.
4) Mission/evangelism and social involvement relate to each other like seed to fruit.

Evangelism has the primary function of preaching repentance, conversion, and eternal salvation. Social action is the result of such repentance and is therefore secondary.

5) Mission is wider than evangelism. Mission is evangelism plus social action. Both parts are important, but evangelism has priority.

6) Evangelism and social action are equally important but genuinely distinct aspects of the church’s total mission. We should therefore not prioritize.
What is your view of the relationship of evangelism to social action?
What did Jesus and the apostles do?
“Did Jesus show compassion and minister to the poor? Certainly. Did Jesus, or the apostles after him, fight for social justice on behalf of the poor and needy? Not at all. While Jesus, through the transformation of lives, began a process that would revolutionize much of the world in regard to injustice, he never made these things a central platform of his ministry or that of the church. Jesus said virtually nothing about the environment, political tyranny, eradication of poverty and illiteracy, elimination of deadly disease, or other social ills. This does not mean that these things are not important, but they were obviously not the heart of his ministry, which was to save us from our sins and enable us to ‘become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus could have started a social revolution without going to the cross, but without the cross we could not be redeemed from sin. Our mission is to call people ‘out of darkness into His marvelous light’ (1 Pet. 2:9 NASB).” ~Gary Gilley
Conclusion

Do we live in a postmodern society?

“The idea that we live in a postmodern culture is a myth. In fact, a postmodern culture is an impossibility; it would be utterly unlivable. Nobody is a postmodernist when it comes to reading the labels on a medicine bottle versus a box of rat poison. If you’ve got a headache, you’d better believe that texts have objective meaning! People are not relativistic when it comes to matters of science, engineering, and technology; rather, they’re relativistic and pluralistic in matters of religion and ethics. But that’s not postmodernism; that’s modernism! That’s just old-line Positivism and Verificationism, which held that anything you can’t prove with your five senses is just a matter of individual taste and emotive expression. We live in a cultural milieu which remains deeply modernist. People who think that we live in a postmodern culture have thus seriously misread our cultural situation.” ~William Lane Craig
Conclusion

- Do we need to adjust our evangelistic message or method to reach postmoderns?
- What can we learn from the emerging (Driscoll) and the Emergent leaders (Bell, McLaren)?
- What will we say about homosexuality?
- What will we do about social action?
Conclusion

“Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.”

~Colossians 4:14; cf. Philemon 24

“…Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”

~1 Timothy 4:10
Conclusion

“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.”

~1 Timothy 1:18-20
“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’”

~2 Timothy 2:16-19
Conclusion

“Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.”

~2 Timothy 4:14-15
Questions or comments?
Evangelism & the Emergent Church

Jordan P. Ballard