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Understanding Emerging Christianity

GERARDO MARTI
and
GLADYS GANIEL

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From Gerardo:
For Laura and our children
Miranda, Zachary, Nathan, and Genevieve

From Gladys:
For Brian

1

Introduction

> Christianity is the only mad religion; which is perhaps, the explanation for its survival—it deconstructs itself and survives by deconstructing itself.
>
> —Jacques Derrida

In a downstairs room of a pub in Belfast, Northern Ireland, people are plotting "insurrection."[1] No, it is not the darkest days of the Troubles—it has been more than a decade since Northern Ireland's historic peace agreement. What's happening is a staged religious event, instigated by philosopher-theologian Peter Rollins and two friends from the Belfast-based Ikon collective. The event is designed to stimulate and provoke the gathering of about 150 people, many of whom are in the city for a conference organized by Rollins called "Re-Emergence."[2]

Rollins and Ikon, a group that he helped found in the year 2000, could be considered part of the Emerging Church Movement (ECM), a religious innovation that, while now several decades old, has only recently begun to attract the attention of social scientists.[3] Both Rollins and Ikon are located on the radical fringes of the ECM by both sympathizers[4] and critics.[5] Many who have been involved with Ikon locate themselves *outside* the ECM, although this reluctance to be labeled is common among other ECM groups. Nevertheless, Rollins's philosophy and Ikon's "theo-dramatic" performances illustrate and embody much of what makes the ECM sociologically and theologically distinct.[6]

The ECM is, among other things, experiential, so we invite you to join us in that lower room in Belfast where people are clustered around bar tables with flickering candles.[7] A long, open bar to the right is packed with people talking as they wait for the event to begin. As anticipation builds, a screen on a far wall features a black-and-white video loop of a church building engulfed in flames. Just after seven o'clock, Pádraig Ó Tuama, his long hair pulled into a ponytail, approaches the microphone, and says, "The Lord be with you." Some reply: "And also with you." He then initiates a "call to worship," saying:

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
In the name of goodness and love and broken community.
In the name of meaning and feeling and I hope you don't screw me.
In the name of sadness, regret, and holy obsession, the holy name of anger, the spirit of aggression.
In the name of beauty and beaten and broken down daily.
In the name of seeing our creeds and believing in maybe, we gather here, a table of strangers, and speak of our hopeland and talk of our danger.
In the name of Mary and Jesus and the mostly silent Joseph.
In the name of speaking to ourselves, saying this is more than I can cope with.
In the name of goodness and kindness and intentionality.
In the name of harbor and shelter and family.[8]

By now, the room has hushed. To the right, Rollins sits at a table with a massive, antique book, a veritable tome of movie-like quality, and tells everyone it contains "the story of tonight." Opening the book, he pretends to read, talking out loud about the people sitting in the front row, the woman with the afro, the guy who looks like he's never set foot in a bar. People start smiling, getting into the joke. Rollins says the book contains many chapters, but he wants to start here: "Chapter One: To Believe is Human."

Rollins stands up, long hair swaying as he talks about a man stranded on a desert island with . . . the beautiful, Academy Award–winning actress Halle Berry! It takes time, but the man eventually succeeds in seducing her, and after a night of glorious passion, he is so excited that he asks her to put on a disguise. He gives her a hat and tells her to hold a branch under her nose like a moustache. He leaves. When he returns, he tells her, "You'll never believe who I just kissed." The point, says Rollins, is that humans need others to witness their stories. Believing is easy. In the desert, the thirsty invent mirages. Everyone laughs. Rollins says he used to try to convince people to believe, but then he found believers everywhere. He has come to see that leading people to the cross means leading people to doubt. Evangelism means offering people a desert in the midst of an oasis.

Ó Tuama returns with a guitar and sings a lament shaped by the Hebrew Bible's book of Jeremiah:

You are strength when I am weak
You are strength when I am weak
You are strength when I am weak
Maranatha

I've given up sometimes when I've been tired
I've given up sometimes when I've been tired
I've given up sometimes when I've been tired
Does it move you?
I've fucked it up so many times
I've fucked it up so many times
I've fucked it up so many times
Hallelujah
I've found my home in Babylon
I've found my home in Babylon
I've found my home in Babylon
Here in exile.

Rollins returns to the big book, flipping pages to another portion, and reads, "Chapter Two: To Doubt is Divine." Rollins says churches protect people from the trauma of doubt. Ministers shield people with their sermons of certainty. Worship leaders comfort them with songs that gush like puppy love. Rarely do Christians approach the cross in all its devastation because they look for shortcuts to the resurrection, ways to bypass the darkness of the cross. So many people discuss their doubts, but they never feel their force because pastors and worship leaders believe on their behalf. As a result, no one gets close enough to Christ, who believes God has abandoned him on the cross.

Those sitting at the tables and standing at the bar listen quietly. Coasters for setting drinks on show the clenched fist of a revolutionary with blood dripping from the wrist. It is a striking image, a gritty graphic cropped from a larger image of the crucified Christ. The fist is nailed to a cross, and dark blood obscures where the nails have been pounded. On that patch of blood, a small set of white letters reads "I Believe in the Insurrection." Rollins tells the group he is calling for an insurrection, a resurrection that starts with stripping oneself of religion and society and politics and identity, then replenishing life in all its forms. He says: "*Resurrection* is nothing if it is not *insurrection*, hurting the powers and structures of the world."

Rollins now carries a large mug of beer and continues to read through different chapters. More stories and metaphors fill the evening as he mixes the surreal alongside the mundane. He describes an "aha" moment about Hitler and the nature of evil he experienced while reading a vintage issue of *Homes and Gardens* magazine. He recounts a parable from a rabbi on the capacity to change the future. He offers observations on Facebook and the desire to protect our image. He reveals the confessions of doubt from the diaries of Mother Teresa, a modern saint.

Eventually, Rollins turns back to the massive book and glances at a final page. He says that the book tells him that nothing will change, that those gathered will return to their mediocrity. Worship leaders will keep singing about Jesus as their boyfriend, and people will keep telling themselves the lies that let them live as they do now. The church will remain the alcohol that keeps people from confronting their desperation. Instead of shock and annihilation, people will continue looking to the cross for comfort and sedation.

Setting aside his beer, Rollins closes his book. He says that while his gut tells him that people will go back upstairs and return to their lives without change, each listener has the power to alter their destiny.

Ó Tuama closes with a benediction:

> The task is ended.
> Go in pieces.
> Our faith has been rear-ended
> certainty amended
> and something might be mended
> that we didn't know was torn.
> And we are fire.
> Bright, burning fire,
> turning from the higher places
> from which we fell,
> emptying ourselves into the
> hell
> in which we'll find
> our loving, and beloved
> brother
> mother
> sister
> father
> friend.
> And so, friends, the task is ended.
> Go in pieces
> to see
> and feel your world.[9]

Throughout the performance, most people maintain an interested and thoughtful silence as they sip their pints. Some elements of the night, such as using the huge book as a prop, might prompt a wry smile or the rolling of eyes, but most accept or appreciate these elements as part of the staging of the event. In the informal conversations that follow—and Emerging Christians are keen

to emphasize the importance of these conversations—people discuss the substance of what was said or relate how they reacted to certain images, such as the church building consumed with fire.

Defining the Emerging Church Movement (ECM)

Experiencing the theo-poetic drama of Ikon's "Insurrection" event serves as a heuristic introduction to the larger dynamics addressed in this book. We do not claim that Ikon or Rollins are "typical" of the ECM, but this brief description provides contextual information about a form the ECM often takes (a "pub church" meeting), the type of "preaching" often featured (storytelling and poetry), the visuals often used (props and video loops), and the critique of existing church institutions for which the ECM is known. Both scholars and the general public do not yet know much about the ECM, and speculation—both positive and negative—drives the agenda and the critique of the movement to date. Although much is unknown, our research leads us to conclude that the ECM is one of the most important reframings of religion within Western Christianity in the last two decades. As social scientists, we do not attempt to provide an argument in support of or against the movement. Rather, we describe the workings of the movement and evaluate its significance most particularly in the American and British/Northern Irish landscapes, while also considering other Western contexts. To address the gap in our scholarly and public understanding, we analyze the origin, practice, and significance of the ECM.

In attempting a social scientific analysis, we acknowledge that we focus on a set of groups that resist definition. In some cases the resistance is passionate and obsessive. With so many voices, groups, and organizations participating in the ECM, few are willing to "define" it,[10] though authors have offered various definitions.[11] As John Drane notes, "It is a work in progress," and "the groups that claim this label are very diverse."[12] Participants at all levels prefer to call it a "conversation," albeit a lively one, that embraces irony and contradiction.[13] Those advocating more radical theological approaches are eager to see all semblance of connection to Christianity virtually eliminated. The lack of systematic coherence among Emerging Christians contributes to the frustration of their more conservative counterparts who work within theological structures furnished with tidy, holistic frames of critique that finely distinguish between the "correct" and "incorrect" varieties of modern Christianity.[14]

Because participants in the movement know there is resistance from conservative Christianity, avoiding labels is part of avoiding stigma. This avoidance of stigma is a core dynamic within the movement as a strategy to find

breathing space in the creation of new frameworks in the face of more public and powerful definitions of Christianity, both conservative and liberal. Indeed, it is interesting to note that even when offered anonymity, one person we spoke with for this project eventually requested that we not quote or draw on the interview material, fearing any association with the ECM could taint their reputation and threaten prospects for future employment. Our observation shows that the avoidance of labels functions to allow variety and fluidity within the movement itself. It also makes gatherings associated with the ECM hard to pinpoint without qualitative immersion in ECM networks and access to insider knowledge. Cory E. Labanow cautions researchers that the ECM is "a diverse and heterogeneous network which no single church can fully represent."[15] Moreover, manifestations of the ECM—including Ikon—are fleeting and impermanent. As John D. Caputo writes, "Ikon is hardly an institution at all, a more literally and visibly deconstructive quasi-institution. It is relatively new and no one knows how long it will be around."[16] Our consequent labeling and isolating of the ECM in this book is not intended to ignore the varied and evanescent strands of the movement, particularly when the movement values autonomy, diversity, and dissent, but to find analytic ways to examine the ECM as an intriguing instance of religious institutional innovation.

Our use of the label "Emerging Church Movement" could be considered problematic. Many insiders who initially embraced the label now see it as marred, inaccurate, and misappropriated. Yet we still find it useful. In our choice of the term "Emerging Church Movement" we agree with Tony Jones, who compares networks of emerging congregations to new social movements.[17] Like Jones, we have observed how the activities of Emerging Christians resemble those of social activists in other social movements. We also think the term "movement" captures the fluidity and dynamism of emerging congregations. At the same time, we recognize that the term "movement" may sound too grand a word to describe what these congregations are doing, especially since most people we consider Emerging Christians do not identify with the ECM by name.

Nevertheless, we argue that Emerging Christians are a discernable, transnational group who share a *religious orientation* built on a continual practice of deconstruction. We deliberately choose the term "religious orientation" rather than "religious identity." A number of distinct religious identities already exist *within the ECM*, ranging from those who explicitly identify with labels such as "emerging," "emergent," and "emergence," to those who discard (or are not aware of) these labels. Other observers have invested more significance in the distinctions between these identities. Mary Gray-Reeves and Michael Perham claim that "*emergence* was a word used to communicate the movement as a whole . . . *Emergent* currently tends to reflect churches inclusive in character

of all sorts of conditions of people; *emerging* is more representative of churches that are evangelical and conservative in nature."[18] Phyllis Tickle also has noted these distinctions, identifying them first in *The Great Emergence* and then claiming that the boundaries between the factions have grown more solid in her follow up book *Emergence Christianity*.[19] In fact, Tickle argues that there was a crisis within Emergence Christianity (the term she uses for the ECM as a whole) in 2009 and 2010, which crystallized when Andrew Jones asked "if 2009 was to be the end of the Emergent ethos?"[20] Jones's comments stirred debate within the movement and ultimately revealed plenty of life.

By the end of 2010, the US-based network Emergent Village had been included in the American *Handbook of Denominations*, a sure sign of recognition in the American religious landscape.[21] Tickle also says that 2010 was the year of Emergence Christianity's "Marburg," referring to a meeting in Germany in 1529 among leaders within the Protestant Reformation, where they could not reconcile their theological differences. Tickle's latter-day Marburg was catalyzed by the publication of Brian McLaren's *A New Kind of Christianity*, the subtitle of which is *Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith*. It was McLaren's answers to those questions that confirmed a split:

> The howl of protest over his proposed answers was as loud almost as were the opposing cries of affirmation. Skilled theologians like Scot McKnight, who had always proclaimed himself as emerging/emergent, now went on record as Emerging, no longer Emergent. Pastors like Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, who had claimed and operated originally under the two labels as interchangeable, now reemphasized his place as Emerging and not Emergent in any way, shape, or form. Emerging Christianity and Emergent Christianity would forever be distinguishable one from the other, both between themselves and before the world at large.[22]

Tickle prefers the term "Emergence Christianity" because it chimes with the moniker she says has been applied to our present era: "The Great Emergence."[23] She explains how scholarly understandings of our period of history have drawn on emergence theory and systems theory to come to be called the Great Emergence. But in our fieldwork experience, the term "The Great Emergence" has not entered the everyday lexicon, being even more unfamiliar to our informants than the terms "emerging" or "emergent." We agree with Tickle that divergence and disagreement within the movement is very real, but we are less sure that people have coalesced around the labels "emerging" and "emergent" as definitively as she claims. Finally, as it relates to terminology, we also recognize that not all groups in the ECM would call themselves

"congregations" or "churches"—some, like Ikon, characterize themselves as "collectives" or use terms like "community" or "group."

We are also aware that while many we consider Emerging Christians resist definition, our acknowledgement of that may seem inadequate when we then proceed to offer our own definitions. It may appear we are trying to put people in boxes that they would resist going in. As Ó Tuama wrote in an e-mail:

> I know that you highlight that many folks resist such identification—but in a way, you have set up a bind within that. I either read definitions that simply feel inadequate to me, or else I voice clarification/objection and then I wonder if it'll be said "Oh, that's such an emergent thing to do, this resisting definition." For me, being part of the Ikon Collective is one part of many parts—being Catholic, Irish, Nationalist, gay, involved in peace, a poet.... Certainly reading the distinctions between "Emerging" and "Emergent" left me bewildered—and left me thinking that my participation in Ikon has absolutely nothing to do with such syntactical semantics.[24]

Such nuances are vital for understanding the ECM. Still, when considered from an international perspective, "emerging" seems to be the most commonly used label within the movement as a whole, thus our adoption in this book of the terms Emerging Church Movement (ECM), Emerging Christians, and emerging congregations. Throughout the book, we will often use the term "congregation" in recognition of its sociological significance,[25] albeit recognizing that it is not a term everyone within the ECM uses.

Further, for us the term *orientation* rather than identity better captures the package of beliefs, practices, and identities shared by people within the ECM. *Orientation* allows us to convey that there is a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices within the ECM. While people may disagree, they can still be considered part of the *movement*. It also allows us to recognize that people within the ECM hold multiple identities simultaneously and that identification as "emerging" may be only occasionally important in their everyday lives (if ever). This leads us to characterize the ECM as an *institutionalizing structure*, made up of a package of beliefs, practices, and identities which are continually deconstructed and reframed by the *religious institutional entrepreneurs* who drive the movement. But Emerging Christians are somewhat unique institutional entrepreneurs, in that one of their primary purposes is to resist the institutionalization of their faith rather than to reform or create new institutions.[26] This desire to resist institutionalization explains our adoption of the term "institutionalizing structure" to describe the swirl of activity generated as Emerging Christians intentionally reframe Christian belief and practice.

Even though we see the ECM as a significant development in Western Christianity, we'll be blunt—in comparison with other religious orientations within global Christianity, the ECM is not numerically large. "Renewalist" expressions of Christianity, which include Pentecostal and charismatic churches as well as charismatics within traditional denominations, are the fastest growing forms of Christianity. About one in four Christians worldwide is now Renewalist—impressive growth, indeed. If one dates the beginnings of modern Pentecostalism to the Azusa Street revivals in Los Angeles (ca. 1906–1915), this growth has occurred over a period of about a century.[27] No such explosion of growth is evident in the ECM as yet. However, observers may be looking for the expansion of the ECM in the wrong way.

Estimates of emerging communities range widely depending on the sources and the definition one uses. In *Emerging Churches*, Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger used an Internet search of Western countries combining googling for key words and contacting leaders of emerging congregations directly, who then provided further information on congregations in their networks. Gibbs and Bolger identified about 200 communities that fit their criteria, mostly in the United States and the United Kingdom. These numbers are not large, but Gibbs and Bolger's definitional criteria were strict and failed to include emerging-type groups within traditional congregations or take account of how the ideas behind Emerging Christianity are being explored and incorporated in established denominations.[28] Denominational connections occur more often than is commonly supposed, but they are veiled and often illicit operations concocting religious mixtures that may be unacceptable to established authorities. Knowing this, one emerging congregation in Florida funded by the United Methodist Church jokingly calls itself "The Meth Lab."

The existence of underground, emerging congregations within established denominational structures especially obscures the number of emerging groups in the United Kingdom. For example, a few months after the publication of Dave Tomlinson's 1995 book *The Post-Evangelical*, the British evangelical magazine *Third Way* published a survey in which 25% of its readers identified themselves as "post-evangelical." As Tomlinson reflected in a 2003 interview with Gordon Lynch, "This was really pretty remarkable given that the idea had only just been launched."[29] Similarly, Michael Moynagh's figures for the prevalence of "Fresh Expressions" congregations in the United Kingdom are surprisingly large. He reports that, "In 2010, the Methodist Church counted 941 fresh expressions, associated with 723 churches out of a total of 5,162—14%. In 2011, the Church of England identified at least 1,000 parishes—6% of the total—with a fresh expression of church."[30] Although Josh Packard argues that the Fresh Expressions figures should be independently verified, he does not dispute that Fresh Expressions is a significant development within British Christianity.[31]

Further, Matthew Engelke's study of the British and Foreign Bible Society affirms that Emerging Christianity is prominent within this historically important and strategically placed organization. Key staff members have been influenced by the ECM, reflected in choices made about activism and in its popular Theos think tank and website.[32]

Another figure is found in anthropologist James S. Bielo's book *Emerging Evangelicals*, which includes an estimate of over 700 communities just in the United States. In another book, Packard's "indicators" for "the reach of the movement" are the Emergent Village cohorts, sponsored in more than "60 cities in the U.S. and around the world in Japan, Ghana, and South Africa." He also notes the Ginkworld database of "self-identified Emerging Church congregations," which "lists 300 in 39 U.S. states and Washington, D.C., 6 Canadian provinces, and 10 European countries along with New Zealand and Australia."[33]

Going beyond these numbers, we suggest that the aggressive advocacy of emerging congregational forms through conferences organized by entities including Emergent Village, TransFORM, and Big Tent Christianity as well as promotion of the ECM through practical seminars on "establishing missional communities" given by leaders (both in person and through online "webinars") indicate broader, international confluence than is apparent when individual emerging congregations are considered in isolation.[34] The leaders, regular members, and occasional visitors to these conferences and workshops are stimulating a broad current of people reading books, hosting dialogues, seeking consultations, and launching new communities both within the confines of established congregations as well as alternative and religiously inconspicuous sites. Their presence is felt across the Christian landscape. As Packard admits, "In my years of studying religion as a sociologist . . . I have yet to come across anyone involved with a mainstream congregation who was not aware of the Emerging Church in at least a very general way. In other words, the Emerging Church certainly has penetrated the common consciousness within religious circles even if their overall numbers do nothing to threaten the viability of more established congregations and denominations."[35] In short, the awareness of ECM groups has disseminated widely alongside indistinct notions of the principles believed to be inherent to the religiosity of Emerging Christians.

Bielo has argued that being an Emerging Christian "is a viable form of identity on the American religious landscape and is present in nearly every region of the United States."[36] While we prefer the term "orientation" rather than "identity," we agree that the ECM is creating social spaces for newly invigorated religious *identities* to emerge and coalesce. Accordingly, we think that the influence of the ECM is greater than the sheer numbers of explicitly allied gatherings. The ECM's significance does not come from its attendance size but

from the way it is contributing to the development of an intriguing, distinctively modern religious orientation.[37] That this orientation can be found transnationally is also significant. Although each emerging congregation is unique and embedded in its local context, emerging congregations localize similarly across national contexts. Many Emerging Christians are aware of the wider movement, with some participating in transnational networks (primarily online) and utilizing resources from other emerging congregations to enhance their own local practices.

Introducing the ECM as a Religious Orientation

In our previous research, both of us have employed ethnographic methods. We share a commitment to the "thick description" of social practices and events, and to privileging the experiences and voices of participants. We also think that direct observation from sites chosen based on insider knowledge is best suited to provide the information that is needed to understand the ECM. Based on our fieldwork, and to further introduce the movement, we provide four descriptive "snapshots" of various manifestations of the ECM: pub churches, Emerging Christian conferences, web-based networks, and neo-monastic communities. All of these manifestations can be found transnationally. We then outline the history of the ECM, emphasizing its evangelical roots yet locating it within wider religious trends such as ecumenism. We suggest that the seeming "successes" of evangelical Christianity, especially in the United States, inadvertently stimulated a broadening critique of conservative Protestantism that resulted in the ECM. We then start to build our argument about the sociological significance of the ECM, describing it as an "institutionalizing structure." This institutionalizing structure provides a framework through which some Christians are strategically renegotiating their religious orientations to the extent that from a sociological perspective Emerging Christian should be considered a viable religious orientation—as distinct and identifiable (although as equally contested) as the evangelicalism from which so many of these Christians "emerged."

Snapshot: Pub Churches

Pub churches are a distinct and widespread phenomenon that encapsulates many principles embedded within the ECM. The vignette with which we opened this book provides a glimpse of what the "pub churches" of the ECM are like. Rollins's "Insurrection" tour, which traveled from Northern Ireland

to North America with stops in several major cities, served as a portable model of the pub gatherings developed by Ikon in the (now closed) Menagerie Bar in Belfast. But not all pub churches are as theatrical as Ikon gatherings. The "Holy Joe's" pub gathering associated with Dave Tomlinson in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s was heavier on conversation and lighter on performance than most Ikon gatherings.

Indeed, conversation seems to be the key to pub churches, as Gerardo found on his first visit to one in Charlotte, North Carolina. Gerardo had arranged to meet the host in the lounge of a popular restaurant. Gerardo takes over the narrative from here:

> The email said to look for a guy with glasses and a beard at a table in the back. "I'll be looking for you," he wrote. With a few business people and small clusters of friends talking quietly on this Tuesday night, it wasn't crowded so I didn't have trouble finding my contact. Lawrence was wearing a black "RAMONES" T-shirt and sitting with two other men at a small table.
>
> "Hey, man," he said and stood up to shake hands. With a bright smile, he asked, "Is it *Hur-ar-doe*?"
>
> "Actually, it's *Jer-rahr-doe*, thanks. Nice meeting you."
>
> After being introduced to the others, I took a seat as a waitress set down three beers. She asked if I wanted a drink, and I said I'd start with a water for now. The guys continued their conversation, talking about their jobs, pressures with classes, travel plans, girlfriends, and family issues—they seemed to have known each other for a while. Soon, two more people came, a man and a woman, greeted warmly, and then another woman who was a "guest" like me. Lawrence eventually looked at his watch.
>
> "Well, I guess we should get started." Lawrence brought out a book from his messenger bag. One of Lawrence's friends seated at the table was an author I didn't recognize. They met in seminary. He had written a new book and was traveling through town, so Lawrence had him come to meet the group. "This is us," he said, and for the next hour we launched into a broad ranging discussion on personal relationships, the church, world history, a few Bible references, and a smattering of other topics in a haphazard, round-robin fashion.
>
> Everyone contributed. Stories were told, and personal experiences shared. Even the new woman, Sarah, got to talking about how she was "in transition" with her faith. She had moved to the area six months ago, bounced from church to church, and was trying to find people to connect with. She said she appreciated the conversation several times.

> At some point, Lawrence looked at his watch and simply said, "I need to get home." We gathered our things, shook hands, shared big smiles all around, and moved out the door. When I got close to my car, I heard Lawrence yell, "Nice meeting you!" I turned to wave and saw him writing on a piece of paper to give to Sarah as she nodded enthusiastically.

This was Gerardo's first experience of a pub church. Since then, we both have seen many gatherings that meet in pubs, bars, cafes, or restaurants and feature conversation, sharing poetry, parables, or other deliberately provocative readings over a pint.[38]

Pub churches are "doing church" in ways that are distinctly non-church-like. Some pub church gatherings are an extension of an existing church ministry.[39] One of the first recorded pub churches was sanctioned in 1955 by the rector of Saint Anne's Church in the Soho area of London.[40] But often pub churches are nonsponsored assemblies organized as underground meet-ups largely untracked by survey researchers or denominational consultants. They are not obviously churchy or even Christian because there are no hymns or conventional liturgy. There is no push for tithing, giving, volunteering, or even responding. Instead, beer loosens the tongue in an effort to promote conversation about matters of life and faith.

Organizers of pub churches intend to shake mainstream Christianity out of what they see as its so-ordinary, so-familiar, and oh-so-relevant orientation to create a fresh and distinctly unformulaic response to the Spirit. As Nadia Bolz-Weber, Lutheran pastor at House for All Sinners and Saints (HFASS) in Denver, puts it: "There's nothing we love more than being Church in bars."[41] Describing the feedback she received from people who had attended a HFASS event in a bar: "They mentioned how amazing it felt to pray in the basement of a bar, how the space felt sacred, and how they realized that there was nowhere else in their lives where their deepest longings could be voiced and held. To which I responded, 'That's why you need a *church*. When your mom dies, your yoga teacher isn't bringing you a casserole.'"[42] In writing about their events in a bar, Bolz-Weber simply says, "It's fun and quirky, and we love it."[43]

Those who participate in pub churches see them as an escape from churchy atmospherics and a refuge for open discussion centered on an unpretentious, egalitarian, and spiritually neutral space. Sharing his experience, Timothy Snyder reports, "What we discovered at Jesus at a Pub was that many of our friends, as well as friends of friends, needed a safe space to ask questions that have no good answers, to deconstruct their past experiences of church, and to voice the fragility of whatever faith they did have."[44] Snyder adds, "The point was never to do anything other than provide a safe space for these

conversations to take place. It was not about conversion or getting anybody to worship or anything else."[45] The leader is a facilitator, and everyone has the opportunity to share without the obligation to do so. Spontaneity is valued; not the spontaneity of Spirit manifestations in prophecies or supernatural ecstatic actions but rather an unforced, free response of individuals toward each other, toward God, and toward one's self. What pub church organizers most reject is an authoritarian, dictatorial stance toward leadership. Pub church leaders seek to minimize exploitation, maximize authentic relationships, and achieve humane fulfillment of religious values without violence or victimization.

Although the long-term sustainability of pub churches is uncertain, the variety of such gatherings creates an experimental, entrepreneurial dynamic. They have no overhead, they require no official ordination for leadership, and can be initiated by almost anyone. Pastors, like Bryan Berghoef, are actively promoting pub churches by providing inspiring stories and accessible resources.[46] There is even an initiative in the United Kingdom (http://www.pubchurch.co.uk/) that offers training and support in pub church practices.[47] For them and others, the pub church embodies the flattening of clerical hierarchy and the reimagining of liturgy that are so important in the ECM. Although critics have argued that pub churches are just another gimmick for gaining religious converts, we see the pub church format as the underlying liturgical model for the ECM. Its format (e.g., flat leadership, open conversation, and leisurely setting) is found in many ECM-influenced congregations as part of their regular services. Some are "established" churches meeting in refurbished sanctuaries, while others are new and experimental communities meeting in homes and rented facilities. Others are much more occasional—even haphazard. Yet all promote what Ben Edson describes as "an environment within which people feel comfortable talking about their faith, their lack of faith, and other related issues."[48]

Snapshot: Emerging Christian Conferences

Pub churches are not isolated entities. We found that leaders of these gatherings are connected to broader networks of Emerging Christians who see themselves as actively renegotiating the beliefs and practices of mainstream Christianity. In November 2010, Gerardo attended the annual Emergent Village conference along with more than 300 pastors, parachurch leaders, seminarians, and dedicated lay people from across America. The conference included a mix of the curious and the committed, those who operated both inside and outside of ECM networks and were motivated to come because they

wanted to hear the now-famous Brian McLaren speak or to reconnect with old friends from previous conferences or to simply explore alternative approaches to Christianity.

From the moment of approaching the church building housing the conference, Gerardo saw attendees gathered in clumps talking, and a buzz of earnest conversation and warm embraces were evident throughout the conference. It was a diverse group in terms of denominational background and social class, yet attendees were mostly men, mostly white, and mostly late twenty- to early thirty-year-olds. More importantly, they included people with various affiliations, including those involved with LGBTQ issues and advocacy, practitioners within neo-monastic communities, and members of the "Outlaw Preachers"—a group inspired by the "rebel-preacher" Jay Bakker (son of televangelists Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker).[49] What drew them together is a shared sentiment that the pretentiousness of Christianity as they have known it must change.

Judging from the excited talk from morning to evening, everyone seemed to have strong opinions on modern Christianity. At times comforting and at other times confrontational, the conference created a meeting ground for issues regarding the practice of Christian community by mixing both inspiration and practicality. The intensity at times was overwhelming; nevertheless, there was also a notable casualness in the air that suggested the ambiance of a church social hour. About a dozen "breakout" sessions expanded on "hot" issues, including details involved in setting up intentional communities, conceptual issues to solve for constructing a new hermeneutic of atonement, experiments with liturgy (including pub churches), a charged session discussing homosexuality in the church, and more. In one session—a classroom packed so tightly that people sat on the floor—a megachurch pastor described his "coming out" as gay during his Sunday sermon. A young woman sitting in the front began to cry; and as she was invited to share her experience, she talked about how she had struggled for years to serve God in youth ministry while hiding her sexual orientation. She spoke through her tears, and a sense of camaraderie imbued others around her. It was her first emerging conference, and these new relationships showed her a way to embrace both her spirituality and her sexuality. In these and other engaging, often emotional, sessions, the tone was less philosophical than relational as the meeting continually emphasized tolerance, sensitivity to trauma and brokenness, and a willingness to support any participant dubbed to be "sincere" toward God and themselves.

We observed similar dynamics at the Re-Emergence conference in Belfast, where we met for the first time. There, speakers like Phyllis Tickle inspired listeners with the idea that the movement with which they were involved—by

virtue of being at the conference, it seemed—was leading a re-formation of Christianity that would have historic implications on par with the Reformation. Her talk galvanized the group, and the collective zeal was palpable. It created a sense among people that they were engaged in something of deep significance for the future of the Christian church as a whole, and that they should therefore take what they had learned back to their various faith communities in the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Europe, and the United States. Like other conferences, it also provided an opportunity for making new friends and meeting new collaborators, stimulating relationships that would be sustained electronically over time and through geographical space.

Large Christian festivals with thousands of attendees, like the Greenbelt Festival in the United Kingdom and the Wild Goose Festival in the United States, similarly provide strategic meeting points for Emerging Christians. Such festivals include panel discussions by prominent figures in the ECM, as well as music and artistic activities. In a pastorally orientated book titled *Losing My Religion? Moving on from Evangelical Faith,* Gordon Lynch recommends that former or postevangelicals who are transitioning and cannot find support in their local areas attend "annual festivals like Greenbelt," as these can be "an important way of meeting with other people who are sharing a similar spiritual journey."[50] Equally important are smaller, more intimate meetings with far fewer participants like the invitation-only Pyrotheology in Praxis gathering at Peter Rollins's home in Greenwich, Connecticut, that brought strangers together in tight quarters for daylong discussions, weaving heady discussions of philosophy alongside deeply emotional exchanges of intimate religious experiences, spiritual disillusionments, and life aspirations.

These are only samples of the many conferences—local, national, and international—that serve as vehicles for sustaining networks of relationships and modeling alternative practices among Emerging Christians. Conferences are important for people in the ECM because insiders to the movement do not define themselves by conventional means like their denominational affiliation or a shared church membership. Their connections do not come from what they are *joining* but rather from a shared sense of what they are jointly *leaving.* Emerging Christians have a contested relationship with the established structures of mainstream Christianity and willingly take on a badge of being "misfits" and "outsiders." Yet, despite their orientation of being marginalized, all share a deep sense of mission at these conferences regarding the future of Christianity. Together, they seek to revitalize Christianity and extend new values and practices in their own religious communities, whether their local gatherings are sanctioned as official "church ministries" or not.

As a scattered, loose-knit network, ECM insiders from different emerging congregations do not often see each other face to face. Gerardo was told

several times by participants at these conferences, "It's not about the meetings. It's about getting together *after* the meetings." Old friends continued to catch up as new friends were brought into the conversation. Any comfortable setting with food and drink stimulates opportunities to build new connections and to refresh old ones. Conferences therefore allow Emerging Christians surprisingly frequent opportunities to meet with their religious colleagues while simultaneously incorporating new people into the movement. In finding like-minded folks and emotional catharsis at conferences, Emerging Christians are not unique. But in the absence of traditional avenues of communication through denominational structures like seminaries, general assemblies, and the like, these conferences provide a key function for the ECM.

Snapshot: Online Networks

From the beginnings of the ECM, the Internet and social media have occupied important places in lending coherence to it as a dispersed network of believers.[51] The digital network of relationships was initially forged in smaller conferences and persisted through websites and e-mail, and now larger networks are fostering more expansive social connections through Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

One of the most significant and longest-lasting manifestations has been the web-based community Emergent Village (www.emergentvillage.com) created in 2001. Even as its centrality begins to fade, it has served for many years as a clearinghouse for ideas, announcements, gatherings, resources, and conferences.[52] During the writing of this book, Emergent Village and the TransFORM Network managed a near-constant stream of tweets from various Twitter accounts.[53] In November 2011, the ECM gained its own section on the patheos.com blog, called "Emergent Village Voice," which it bills as a forum where fifty leading voices in the ECM comment on various matters. In effect, this moved the emergentvillage.com conversation to patheos, a catch-all religion site with eleven "Faith Channels": Atheist, Buddhist, Catholic, Evangelical, Hindu, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Pagan, Progressive Christian, and Spirituality. Emergent Village Voice falls under the Progressive Christian channel. Doug Pagitt describes it on the site like this:

> This blog is an experiment.
>
> We are seeking to include as many voices as are willing to join together and tell stories, create ideas, and generate friendships that will compel us to the future. There are more than 50 people who will be

adding their voices to this conversation. Some will write, some will post audio, some will post video.

You will hear from Christians and Jews; denominationalists and free-range spiritualists; conservatives and liberals; the faith-filled and the faith-hesitant.

We are a collective of people who are not only concerned about the "right and left" but now and the future. Emergent Village is a community that wants to make something together.

We invite you to join us.[54]

Pagitt's welcome post demonstrates the value placed on inclusivity, ecumenism, and conversation in the ECM—as well as the priority put on using social media.

Pagitt's explicit mention of "now and the future" underscores Emerging Christians' eagerness to employ new methods for communication and spiritual development (like the World Wide Web), and their willingness to change and adapt. A forward-looking temporality is key to the ECM, and it is electronically embodied online. The World Wide Web allows for the creation of multiple forums through which the ECM practices an ongoing self-criticism (which is revealed mostly through blog posts) and supplements informal conversations and occasionally formalized presentations at conferences (e.g., Emergent Village annual conversations). Further, the Internet is an important platform for the charismatic stars of the ECM—Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Tony Jones, Peter Rollins, Nadia Bolz-Weber, Rachel Held Evans, and others—who use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, and personal blogs to promote their ideas, lectures, and initiatives. Such figures also commonly post on blogs with wider general readership, such as patheos or the Huffington Post. Other examples include Rollins setting up a "Dis-Courses" Facebook page to facilitate discussion among groups who are embarking on projects similar to those developed by Ikon, namely, the Last Supper, the Evangelism Project, Atheism for Lent, and the Omega Course.[55] This Facebook page later developed into a more elaborate "Pyrotheology" website, which provides more information about these practices and includes videos featuring Rollins and testimonials from people involved with Ikon.[56] The CANA Initiative, launched in 2013, is yet another attempt to mobilize networks of committed insiders and catalyze further connections that uses social media as a means to promote new projects. For participants in the ECM, social media provides a viable, legitimate, and personal means for promoting events, keeping in touch, supporting each other, sharing ideas, and building virtual, networked communities of like-minded people.

Snapshot: Neo-Monasticism

In 2013, Gladys visited East Central Ministries in Albuquerque, New Mexico.[57] East Central Ministries is located in the rough International District, a multicultural, multiethnic community that is home to a number of "undocumented" migrants. Director John Bulten explained that the group was inspired by John Perkins's Christian development approach, which entails living and working *alongside* (not *for*) the poor.[58] Many of those involved with East Central Ministries live near each other in a housing cooperative in the community, thus embodying the practices recommended by Perkins and also by other, city-based neo-monastic communities. East Central Ministries has an array of programs, including Growing Awareness Urban Farm, Community Food Co-op, Casa Shalom Housing Co-op, One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center, English as a second language and computer classes, Creation Park, After School Club, Juntos Youth Program, Kids' Club, Youth Internships, Escuela Luz del Mundo School, and one-off events.

East Central Ministries is made up of several buildings, including a homely welcoming area patrolled by a cat, as well as a shop, a large warehouse for a food co-op, work and storage areas, a doctor's office, and greenhouses. Gladys and her husband were led around the site, and East Central workers explained how the varied projects they had started responded to needs in the local area. As they discussed the problems faced by individuals living near East Central, they often stopped to greet people who dropped in. Gladys was struck by the cheerful buzz as people came and went about their business, smiling and chatting. Women were cleaning up after the co-op after having distributed food. Men were bringing lumber they had salvaged for building items for the store. A small group, including a Catholic priest, prayed together. John described the work as fulfilling but was frank in admitting that it was sometimes stressful and tiring. He said that the community's shared meals, prayers, and fellowship were essential in sustaining their activism.

With its housing co-op, shared spiritual practices, and commitment to urban community development, East Central Ministries is an example of a neo-monastic community. Neo-monastics are "intentional communities" of Christians who either live together in a large house or close to each other in a specific geographical area.[59] They commit to compassionate service to each other and the local community, and attempt to live self-sustaining lifestyles often combining craftsmanship, environmentalism, and charitable work.[60] In contrast to the casual connections of pub churches or the occasional gatherings at conferences, neo-monastic communities are characterized by intense and holistic commitment. Neo-monasticism does not emphasize celibacy and

is not committed to poverty but rather uses historical elements of community living (found in documents like *The Rule of St. Benedict*) to cultivate a deeper level of Christian fellowship that is reminiscent of the first church community described in the Book of Acts Chapter 2 where "all the believers were together and had everything in common," meeting together daily for worship, sharing food and faith, "with gladness and simplicity of heart." While neo-monastic communities can vary widely, Bielo provides a list of common practices that characterize them.[61] He describes them as including communities organized around the sharing of resources (food, money, housing, clothing, and transportation); individuals and communities prioritizing becoming debt free; groups eating communally on a daily basis; members encouraging each other to not live on 100% of their income; decreasing reliance on "the system"; communities eliminating ownership of a church building, thus freeing time and resources to devote to other expressions of faith; individuals working together to eliminate various addictions, from alcohol to shopping; and individuals and small groups regularly attending weekend or weeklong silent prayer retreats.

Perhaps more than the previous expressions of the ECM that we have featured in these snapshots, neo-monastic communities seem to appeal to people from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, rather than being traceable to developments within evangelical Protestantism. Some see the impetus for the recent expansion of neo-monasticism in the inspiration from earlier efforts such as the Catholic Worker movement, the ecumenical Iona Community in Scotland, or the Taizé community in France. In Northern Ireland, the context from which Ikon emerged, now defunct neo-monastic groups, such as the ecumenical Columbanus Community (1983–2003) and the Cornerstone Community (1982–2012), emphasized the importance of Catholics and Protestants living intentionally together *as fellow Christians* in a religiously divided society.[62] The descriptions of Fr. Michael Hurley, a Jesuit priest and founder of the Columbanus community, of the daily structure of communal prayer and fellowship of the group, are typical of contemporary neo-monastic communities.[63] For example, in Ireland, the Magis organization for young adults, a collaboration between lay Catholics and Jesuit priests, supports young people living in intentional communities in Dublin. This includes assisting in the development of communal practices such as shared meals and the "Examen" method of prayer developed by Jesuits.[64]

Neo-monastic communities do not become congregations. Instead, they encourage members to commit to local congregations as an extension of their commitment to the local community. In this way, these groups are not intended to be insular but missionally expansive and engaged. Two of the most prominent contemporary examples are the Simple Way in Philadelphia and Moot in London. The focus of these and other groups on microcommunity and

sustainable living, along with a decentering of doctrinal correctness and social conservatism, resonates with the ECM as a whole. Emerging Christians appear committed to a radical reconsideration of what they see as a consumerist, apathetic, privileged, and violent status quo. For them, the goals they have been told to strive for as young adults are soured as inauthentic ideals that merely support a heartless and destructive world system. In sum, neo-monasticism represents a movement of Christians to live in committed community, to foreground life-structuring ideals, and to reconsider their taken-for-granted stance toward their relationships to the capitalist system, different faith traditions, and the environment.

The ECM in Historical Perspective

Many observers date the origins of the ECM to the early 1990s when the movement became most visible in North America. In their popular writings, pioneers of the ECM in the United States such as Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones have described the events of that decade, emphasizing the evangelical roots and youth-orientation of the ECM.[65] On the other hand, Doug Gay, writing from a UK context, argues that the origins of the ECM are located further back and linked to wider trends within global Christianity, such as reforming impulses in what he calls Low Church Protestantism (LCM), the ecumenical movement, and the loosening of denominational boundaries after Vatican II.[66] Unlike in the United States, the ECM in the United Kingdom can be more readily linked to developments within established denominations, such as the joint Anglican-Methodist "Fresh Expressions" project, the Church of England's 2004 *Mission Shaped Church* report, and the Church of Scotland's "Church Without Walls" initiative.[67] The logic behind these initiatives is that traditional forms of church are failing to reach people in largely secularized Britain—hence the emphasis on mission. For example, mission is a major theme of *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice,* published in 2012 by Michael Moynagh, a Church of England minister and member of the national Fresh Expressions team. This book, running to nearly 500 pages, offers a theological rationale for Fresh Expressions and other "new contextual churches," as well as chapters full of practical advice about how to start and sustain such congregations. Moynagh writes that "the secularization thesis is wrong" and "church demise" is not "inevitable." Rather, "the problem has been the church's failure to adapt; new contextual churches are the Spirit's means of reversing decline."[68]

In the more highly "churched" United States, the ECM now seems to place less emphasis on mission and more on critique of the existing churches,

although the UK context has not been without its critics, either. Tomlinson's popular book *The Post-Evangelical* served as a sort of critical manifesto for UK Christians, and Ganiel considers Ikon, in its Northern Irish context, as an embodied critique of traditional Northern Irish evangelicalism.[69] That said, in the United States, one of the major initial stimuli for the ECM was an evangelical-led, mission-style project aimed at youth—not unlike *The Mission Shaped Church*.

Growing Up and Moving Out of Evangelicalism

In the United States, the ECM began as a youth-oriented movement rooted in a concern for the religious experience of young adults.[70] Much of the leadership and the focus on outreach during the 1990s was based on reformulating strategies to minister to twenty-somethings. There was a strong belief that the rise of postmodernism presented a combination of threat and opportunity, so meetings were set to deal with perceived challenges presented by contemporary young adults. Organizationally, the beginnings of the ECM took shape through an initiative of the Leadership Network, a private parachurch evangelical organization that stimulates innovation and dialogue among church leaders. The Leadership Network established the Young Leaders Network in the late 1990s with an enterprising group of pastors and youth ministers under forty to confront what they defined as the greatest problem of the contemporary church—namely, its lack of being "contemporary." Concerns ranged from theology to aesthetics. These leaders believed churches were losing the next generation due to their failure to keep up with the culture and concerns of younger cohorts.

In the concern for youth, the movement owed its origins to conservative evangelical Christianity. But some have come to regret their initial experimentation. Fueled by images of heresy in their religious imagination, many conservative Christians very much fear the ECM because of a perception that its adherence to "sound doctrine" is softening (like the virgin birth) or because of its rejection of "orthodox" Christian rituals (like "closed" communion/Eucharist). As the movement developed, it came to integrate people who had already rejected forms of Christianity—especially evangelical fundamentalism—and sought new ways to express their lingering faith. When Gerardo talked with a pastor in his late fifties attending an ECM conference and asked if the movement was the answer to reaching young adults, he said, "It's one answer." He was quick to say that "the church" should welcome this experimentation and "let young people do things and dig in the past for the gold of our tradition." This pastor was no fan of the constraining structures of his denomination. "They [young people] want elbow room and understand how constraining it is."

Shortly after the formation of the Young Leaders Network, a string of conferences (like the New Edge Conference and the Terra Nova Project) and Internet sites raised issues on interpreting the Bible, approaching "nonbelievers," considering connections between "ancient" and present-day liturgy, and evaluating spiritual practices, all with a view toward reinventing contemporary evangelism.[71] In these beginnings, the conversation within the ECM took conservative evangelicalism as its base of critique,[72] and much of its conversation still consists of stories of "de-conversion" from fundamentalist-tinged orientations.[73] Such discussions consistently frame modern Christianity as a problematic institution. Given these reactionary roots, the ECM is sometimes considered to be merely a reinvented evangelicalism. But this minimizes the resonance that the overall message of the movement has had once the orientation spread outside its original clusters to mainline, other Christian, and non-Christian believers.[74] For example, while we cannot claim the surveys we draw on in this book are representative of the ECM as a whole, we found that 29% of our respondents from eight ECM congregations indicated they come from an evangelical background, and a higher percentage (31%) indicated their background as Mainline Protestant. In addition, Roman Catholics (13%) and those from nonreligious, agnostic, or atheist (9%) backgrounds participate in these ECM congregations.[75]

Our observation suggests that the ECM does not appeal most to younger, college-age adults but rather to older, more educated, and still-single young adults who have gained their independence and seek to uncover outlets for a more flexible Christianity. Our survey data supports this, revealing that nearly 32% of ECM respondents were 18–25, but a larger percentage—37%—were 26–35 years old. In terms of education, 95% have at least some college education, with 23% having earned a graduate degree. Slightly more than half (50.3%) of them were single, and even if married (43%), more than two-thirds (68%) of our respondents had no children.[76] Participating in events and dialogues inspired by the movement, Emerging Christians find places that allow for independence of thought, expression of religious questions and opinions, and an uncertain commitment to institutions. Young adults in their older twenties and early thirties committed to the movement may be active careerists in secular jobs or they may be in seminary. Traveling to conferences and events can be expensive, so participants tend to have both the income and the flexibility to attend. Some are married couples who do not yet have the time-consuming demands of childrearing; indeed, the primary reason given for the ending of the Without Walls Emergent Village cohort in Newtownards, Northern Ireland was "kids." As they wrote on their website: "[Kids are] all incredible blessings and an answer to prayers but it was also the beginning of the end for Cohort. We were no longer free to meet up so regularly. Baby-sitters

were needed, free-time was gobbled up, tiredness and extra parental responsibilities simply meant that Cohort could no longer be what it once was."[77] Packard speculates that emerging congregations may become "stops" on people's religious journeys between the institutionalized churches of their childhoods and the institutionalized family-friendly churches of their adulthood.[78]

What characterizes these younger Emerging Christians is their aptitude for articulating an "expertise" on what "the church" is and how it has failed. Moreover, the few young adults who come from *nonreligious* backgrounds are glad to find a place that tolerates their skepticism about "church" and their uncertainties about the doctrines and practices of Christianity. ECM events are places defined by an active renegotiation of orthodoxy, so both sets of young adults (those who view themselves as experts on the "failure" of the church and those uncertain of any faith) find a workable middle ground. Older adults who have passed beyond their thirties round out the movement (32% of our survey respondents are over thirty-five), sometimes as attendees, other times as even more aggressive questioners of the faith and promoters of a new future.[79]

By 2004, blogs, conferences, articles, and books coalesced around a new set of imperatives representing the movement. Most especially, Brian McLaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy* attempted to isolate a religious identity that was as definitive as it was ambiguous.[80] A combined statement and manifesto, the subtitle of the book seeks to capture its message: *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.* Tickle considers McLaren's book to be the "analog of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses on the door of Wittenberg Church."[81] Certainly many people were introduced to the ECM through this bestselling book.[82]

Growing in New Ecumenical Spaces

In the United Kingdom, Doug Gay dates the immediate origins of what he prefers to call the "Church: Emerging" to the "alternative worship" movement of the late 1980s.[83] He locates this within "post charismatic" and "post-'reformed'/post-evangelical" currents. Again, the ECM's British origins have much in common with the ECM's American (evangelical) origins. Yet Gay also argues that the alternative worship movement was "heavily precedented by more isolated and marginal experiments in practice within a range of traditions from at least the 1960s onwards,"[84] and that such experiments were possible in part because of "three contextual shifts":[85] the broadly diffused influence of the ecumenical movement, the new climate produced by the Second Vatican Council, and the influence on Low Church Protestants of

a new wave of missiological thinking, forged in the post–Second World War experience of decolonization.

We agree with Gay that it is important to be mindful of these broader shifts, not least because they helped create contexts—on both sides of the Atlantic—in which it became easier and less threatening for people to critique their own Christian traditions and to be open to the insights and gifts that they might gain from engaging with other Christian traditions. On the other hand, Gay admits that participants in the ECM do not often recognize the influence of the ecumenical movement on their own movement, and that most scholars and ECM practitioners have failed to make connections between ecumenism and the ECM.

Gay makes ecumenism central to the closest he "venture(s)" to a definition of the ECM:

> The Emerging Church can perhaps best be understood (and defended) as an irreverent new wave of grassroots ecumenism, propelled from within low church Protestantism by a mix of longing, curiosity, and discontent. It is what we in the UK might call DIY ecumenism, constructed by means of a series of unauthorized remixing and emboldened by an (evangelical) ecclesial culture of innovation and experimentation. It is a variant of ecumenism which for the most part is ignorant of the history and protocols of institutional ecumenism, but which "frankly might not give a damn" for them in any case, since it still carries a genetic confidence about remaking the Church and its mission in response to the Spirit's prompting.[86]

Gay's ecumenically centered definition resonates with many of the ideas and practices of the ECM explored in this book, including the appropriation of ideas, rituals, and liturgical practices from a variety of Christian traditions. Influenced by Gay's work, we think that if evangelicalism is the seed from which the ECM has sprouted, the diffuse influence of the ecumenical movement has, almost unnoticed, provided the fertile soil in which it has grown.

The Deconstructed Church

We title this book *The Deconstructed Church* and define Emerging Christians in terms of sharing a *religious orientation* built on a continual practice of deconstruction. We characterize the ECM as an *institutionalizing structure,* made up of a package of beliefs, practices, and identities that are continually deconstructed and reframed by the *religious institutional entrepreneurs* who drive the

movement and seek to resist its institutionalization. As such, the ECM is best seen as a mix of both reactive and proactive elements, vying for the passion and attention of Christians and nonbelievers. Emerging Christians *react* primarily against conservative/evangelical/fundamentalist Protestantism but also against other forms of traditional Christianity that they have experienced as stifling or inauthentic. At the same time, they *proactively* appropriate practices from a range of Christian traditions (Gay's "DIY" ecumenism) to nourish their individual spirituality and to enhance their life together as communities.[87]

Among Emerging Christians, the term "deconstruction" is not consistently used and therefore not a term actively discussed except occasionally and among self-consciously philosophical members.[88] But in examining the ways in which Emerging Christians renegotiate religious beliefs and practices, we note with sociologists Stephan Fuchs and Steven Ward that *the practice of "deconstruction" is a form of micropolitics in which actors establish competitive arenas in response to pressures for conformity.*[89] The focus of such work is on the personal religiosity of members. Emerging Christians create ongoing opportunities to push off religious pressures to comply with standard narratives. Labanow writes that Emerging Christians are "aware of the extreme complexities of their world and their faith" and "will never be satisfied with final interpretations." Moreover, "Since deconstruction and reconstruction are such fundamental characteristics of the emerging church, its practitioners are encouraged to give ample attention to these challenges."[90]

Deconstruction, then, represents an opportunity for actors to "irritate, if not overthrow" an overarching regime "by pointing to its contingent and arbitrary status."[91] In this way, we understand that members of the ECM actively deconstruct congregational life by placing into question the beliefs and practices that have held sway among conventional Christians. For Emerging Christians, the Christian institutions they experienced had little "wiggle-room" for belief and practice. Their entire religious orientation as an Emerging Christian necessarily resides in relation to conventional Christianity. Yet Emerging Christians strive for a renegotiation of Christianity precisely because they want to stay within the broader tradition while creating more room to navigate within it. Emerging Christians want to create Christian communities that allow for a sustainable religious autonomy, ones where a broad scope of freedom in individual belief and religious conviction reign.

But an autonomous religious self necessarily entails friction with the conflicting goal of institutions to urge conformity and avoid disruption.[92] Emerging Christians actively challenge multiple forms of religious conformity they encountered in their past and heartily welcome all critiques of institutionalized Christianity based on the push for conformity. Therefore, as Emerging Christians try to change the mainstream institutions of modern Christianity,

we observe a sometimes subtle yet often overt political wrangling of meanings and practices. As one ECM leader said, "I want to subvert my church—which I love. But she needs to change."

The work of sociologist Erving Goffman implies that such institutional "micropolitics" are a natural consequence of institutionalized religious life, especially to the degree that an institution is perceived to be demanding and confining. Individuals require social structures for their "selves" to exist; nevertheless, Goffman states that an individual "takes up a position somewhere between identification with an organization and opposition to it."[93] The importance of Goffman's insight is his recognition that various institutionalized arenas of society threaten to swallow individuals whole within their normative and comprehensive definitions of what committed "selves" should be. And individuals find ways to push back.

So, where does a religious self reside? Does a properly religious self exist merely through socialization into expected norms of behavior? No, according to Goffman, "Our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull." Goffman concludes, "It is thus against something that the self can emerge." Indeed, Goffman uses a provocative phrase by writing, "Our sense of personal identity often resides *in the cracks*." It is therefore possible to define one's religious self as resting between absorption and opposition to an institution. Goffman states that such ongoing oppositions comprise "the underlife" of institutions.[94]

Following Goffman's insights, the ECM corresponds to "the underlife" of mainstream Christian institutions. Acts of deconstruction are happening both at the elite level of highly mobilized current and ex-pastors (including current and ex-seminarians) who are reconstructing religious communities and among grassroots Christians (including "seekers," "the unchurched," "the dechurched," and generally "spiritual people") who are negotiating the mundane practice of their private Christian faith. In general, five aspects of the ECM's deconstruction stand out as particularly notable:

First, *Emerging Christians consistently characterize themselves as anti-institutional.* A bold spokesperson for the ECM, Tickle simply states, "Emergence Christianity is, first and foremost, deinstitutionalized."[95] Using empirical data, both Bielo and Packard have argued that the ECM's anti-institutional stance is central to its identity and to its appeal.[96] Anti-institutional—implying an active posture against institutions—is a stronger term than deinstitutionalized, which Tickle seems to use in a descriptive way. For us, anti-institutional is a more appropriate term. For Bielo, Emerging Christians' anti-institutional sentiment is consistent across ECM groups and persistent across time. For Packard, the ECM continues to thrive, albeit on what he characterizes as the "margins" of American Christianity, because it employs strategies to resist

what is often considered the sociologically inevitable process of institutionalization. Such strategies include deliberately limiting the power and influence of professional clergy; expecting laypeople to take initiative within congregations; limiting flows of information between professional clergy and laypeople to a need-to-know basis (since laypeople are not expected to "report back" on all their activities); allowing congregational activities to end before they become institutionalized; deliberately disrupting normally taken-for-granted religious ideas, routines, and rituals; emphasizing inclusivity rather than religious boundaries; and stressing the independence of local religious communities. Within the ECM there is considerable openness among leaders (and potential leaders) for creating small, informal, and nonhierarchical assemblies that are not connected to sanctioned theological seminaries or staffed denominational structures. Although the long-term sustainability of such groups is uncertain, the variety of gatherings rapidly being formed stimulates an experimental, entrepreneurial dynamic that propels leaders to connect with other leaders through both face-to-face and online conferences and networks. These larger gatherings consistently demonstrate an emphasis on relationships over programmatic structures, a sentiment reflected in a tweet from Tony Jones quoting the Russian theologian Alexis Khomiakov, "The Church is not a doctrine, not a system, and not an institution. The Church is a living organism, an organism of truth and love, or more precisely: *truth and love as an organism*."[97] The importance of network alliances is highlighted while overly close connections to larger, more established structures of religious training and dialogue are desperately avoided.

Second, *Emerging Christians' approach to issues ranging from salvation, sanctification, and eschatology—especially alongside a great concern for social justice—encourages a form of ecumenism that transcends many theological and ecclesial boundaries.* Mainline and evangelical Christians who formerly found themselves divided over issues like LGBTQ rights and aggressive evangelistic tactics now meet together in a common critique of "right-wing evangelicals." Moreover, Emerging Christians draw freely from strands of Christian traditions in a shared desire to create tradition-rich, yet culturally relevant, local church experiences. Groups from various Christian orientations partner on social initiatives (providing vocal and legislative support for gay marriage) and share ideas on re-creating liturgical formats that mix different types of musical instrumentation and new media technology.[98] This transcending of boundaries reinforces the ECM's goal of "inclusivity," as Emerging Christians strive to welcome a range of theological and ethical viewpoints to the "conversation" that they see as central to their movement. The emphasis on conversation also reinforces the encouraged processes of deconstructing modern Christianity and deconstructing individuals' personal religious beliefs and identities. Using

a term employed by Emerging Christians, Packard and George Sanders emphasize the "messiness" of the ECM. For them, "Messiness can be understood as the opposite of over-coded and striated spaces and interactions that delimit and divide experiences and people."[99] Packard claims—and we agree—that the ECM would not be able to maintain its emphasis on deconstruction if it became more "institutionalized," because the very process of institutionalization would by definition mean that more rigid boundaries must be drawn.[100]

Third, *Emerging Christians actively seek to avoid entrenched power structures by bringing young adults into leadership and decision-making in their local church context.* Young adult leadership is widely assumed within the movement, and for many outside the movement *Emerging = Under 30*, an equation that further legitimizes giving greater programmatic control to young adults. Inside the movement, participants have a much broader range of ages, and it is not unusual to meet people in gatherings and at conferences who are in their fifties and sixties. But age hierarchies are openly challenged, and young adults are expected to take leadership responsibility, such that sympathy with the ECM coincides with encouraging young adults to lead worship, speak in public assemblies, direct project teams, and create new programs as a way to encourage participation and "shift" the culture of the church toward the next generation.

Fourth, *experimentation and creativity are core dispositions among Emerging Christians.* Creativity is evident both from the popular leaders of the movement—public figures whose books and blogs offer "new" theological justifications for the ECM—and from participants, who are expected to be involved in shaping and choosing congregational practices. The sheer variety of practices within emerging congregations illustrates how Emerging Christians are eager to innovate based on older religious forms. Many Emerging Christians lament that their previous, usually evangelical, traditions neglected artistic expression. They now endeavor to use the arts to facilitate individual spiritual development. Activities foster games and nonformal interaction. Playfulness and participation are highly esteemed. And creative approaches to liturgical processes are welcomed.

Fifth and finally, *Emerging Christians negotiate potential religious polarization by striving to create a new type of "neutral religious space" that is church-ish without being church-y.* The ECM is dependent on established institutions at the same time it attempts to win independence from them. Emerging Christians believe they are living in a changed religious landscape in which foundational Christian doctrines are no longer assumed and some traditional church practices are viewed as irrelevant. Furthermore, Emerging Christians see themselves as rescuing core aspects of Christianity from the entanglement of modernity, bureaucracy, and right-wing politics. Emerging Christians are also rescuing their own selves from the shallowness, hypocrisy, and rigidity of their

religious past. And while some Emerging Christians are open and explicit in their commitment to the movement, we know from our fieldwork that there are other "secret" adherents with leadership and internship positions in established denominations who keep their sympathies and affiliations quiet so as not to create a disturbance.

So when approaching the ECM, rather than noting its "anti-institutional" orientation and succumbing to a hopeless lack of definition, we view it as a form of institutional innovation, that is, *an institutionalizing structure* that relies less on formal organizations than informal networks. We argue that the ECM is driven by *religious institutional entrepreneurs* who share a particular *religious orientation* based on deconstruction. We conceive of the ECM as a relatively stable package of beliefs, practices, and identities that exist via a series of relationships, affiliations, and affinities, which is sustained both *formally* through partnerships and collaborative efforts and *informally* through friendships and shared ideals. The ECM is therefore *relatively coherent* yet *haphazardly organized*. It is deliberately *messy*.[101] This somewhat amorphous quality makes it at once easy to pinpoint figureheads of the movement while dismissing the more substantive social structures and everyday participants that perpetuate it. Emerging Christians are themselves caught in a distinctively sociological dilemma: how to revitalize the Christian "church" while simultaneously avoiding what they see as the "trappings" of church institutions. The apparent chaos observed in the ECM stems from the way its practices serve to exaggerate the inherent heterogeneity of Christianity itself. The ECM accepts and encourages *multiple approaches* to spirituality. Indeed, the apparent nebulousness of the movement has prompted some scholars in their casual observations to dismiss the relative substance of the larger undertaking. Yet gauged by the continued activity within the movement itself—as well as the aggressive polemic against the movement from outside critics—the ECM is a stable and significant aspect of US and UK religion.[102]

Emerging Christians may or may not explicitly identify with the ECM through its figureheads or its conferences or its websites, but they do identify with the aspects of the ECM's deconstruction that we describe throughout this book. Most especially, Emerging Christians should be considered to have a distinctive and viable religious orientation based on a fierce notion of individuality.[103] Through immersive communities that afford diverse practices, Emerging Christians enact a *strategic religiosity* that reveals itself in multiple ways. Recognizing this orientation helps us move beyond previous scholarly and popular speculation that participants in the ECM are "innovation consumers" who relish novelty and actively seek out opportunities to experience the spectacle of whatever is new or are simply Christian "hipsters" who, in effect, seek style over substance.[104] What we describe is also more than a

vaguely defined, fluid, postchurch religiosity. Their "switching" is not a casual happenstance but an intimate and intentional part of their religious lives. They are not disaffected religious "nones." Participants in the ECM define their various congregations as a type of "haven" that supports a valued aspect of their personal identity.[105] Their participation is often associated with personal and emotional strain rather than exuberance in a recreational pursuit. Yet all believe they have found a place that allows them to be "themselves." In the end, through their congregations and their involvements Emerging Christians work to accomplish a strategically enacted *religious individualization*. Religious individualization enables them to fulfill their religious imperatives however ambiguously they may be defined.

The Structure of This Book

In the rest of this book, we describe what it is like to be an Emerging Christian and analyze Emerging Christians' activities and their significance in the wider Western religious landscape. We privilege the lived experience of Emerging Christians, utilizing a unique data set drawn from congregations, parachurch organizations, and informal ECM-type communities. Our conclusions are based on more than a decade of research within the ECM, primarily in the United States and Northern Ireland.[106] The majority of our data were collected from ECM participants, communities, and conferences from 2010 through 2013 using participant observation, focus groups, and in-depth interviews with leaders and participants; observation and interaction using social media; and examination of available textual sources. Numerous intense conversations at ECM gatherings are also part of this data. Public figures were not considered representative of the movement as a whole, although their writings helped clarify and crystallize some of the key aspects of Emerging Christians' religious orientation. Our material was supplemented with data collected by Tony Jones for his doctoral dissertation in practical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Using his "insider's" knowledge of emerging congregations, Jones visited eight representative congregations across the United States in 2005 and 2006, groups that are examples and models within the movement and whose leaders are well networked; and he conducted interviews, focus groups, and congregational surveys. Although Jones's primary interest was in helping emerging congregations develop their theology, he gathered data in a manner relevant to social science researchers like us. We are impressed with the quality of the data, and he kindly granted us access.

Chapter 2, *Pluralist Congregations,* characterizes the congregations of the ECM as *pluralist congregations,* seeing them as rare examples of religious institutions that—rather than failing to recognize or trying to suppress

diversity—instead try to facilitate it. The ECM is a congregational faith, one that relies on patterned relationships, regular gatherings, and ongoing involvement. The pluralist congregations of the ECM are distinct in that they promote individualism while at the same time providing a basis for community around shared experiences and relationships. Pluralist congregations exemplify what sociologist Ulrich Beck has called "cooperative egoism," as they strive to form the basis for a religious orientation that straddles the tension between individualism and collective identity.

Chapter 3, *Being an Emerging Christian,* shares the stories of Emerging Christians, highlighting their individual experiences of deconstruction, often characterized as "deconversion" stories. We emphasize the common experiences of Emerging Christians, such as disillusionment with evangelicalism, megachurches, or rigid mainline denominations; and the liberating effects reported from reading Brian McLaren books. This chapter introduces the concept of *strategic religiosity* and shows that what appears on the surface to be a freewheeling heterodoxy reacting to the established institutions of contemporary Christianity is, on more investigation, a strategically framed religious self that is nurtured, legitimated, and sustained through congregational involvement.

Chapter 4, *Faith as Conversation,* emphasizes the value placed on dialogue and discussion within the ECM. Understanding how institutional entrepreneurs use discourses helps explain the effectiveness of the "faith as conversation" approach of the ECM. Drawing on the literature on institutional entrepreneurship, we argue that Emerging Christians are *religious institutional entrepreneurs.* The "conversation" of the ECM is an almost paradigmatic example of the type of "meaning work" that has been so central to studies of institutional entrepreneurship. Moreover, the common and expected participation in dialogue reveals the ECM as a form of *collective institutional entrepreneurship.* We analyze the content of the ECM conversations, focusing on the importance placed on asking questions and on the distinct ideas about the nature of truth, embracing doubt, and the nature of God, exploring how these ideas shape Emerging Christians' religious orientations.

Chapter 5 *Deconstructing Congregational Practices,* analyzes Emerging Christians' renegotiation of congregational practices. We argue that the ECM has two dominant conversational partners in its reshaping of congregational practice: the "Seeker Megachurch" and the "Solemn Mainline" experience. For us, Emerging Christians' renegotiations of congregational practices embody their critiques of the "mega" and the "mainline," especially their approaches to preaching, leadership, public worship, and the physical locations of church. Further, emerging congregations' practices are deliberately open, inclusive, and drawn from a variety of traditions—all in an effort to make people feel

comfortable and to allow them *multiple paths* to choose which religious practices work best for them.

Chapter 6, *Following Jesus in the Real World,* explores how Emerging Christians live—or strive to live—in the "real world." While many emerging congregations got their start as "church plants" or "missional" communities, Emerging Christians disagree about the extent that they should be living their lives to try and "convert" others. Some Emerging Christians choose lifestyles that they see as inherently political, believing that this is the best way for them to live out their Christianity. For them, Jesus's mission was a *political* one on behalf of the poor and marginalized, so they seek to emulate Jesus by identifying with disadvantaged communities, or working for peace and reconciliation, through conventional political engagement, forming neo-monastic communities, creating Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZs), and choosing careers that enable them to work for social justice. Overall, immersive relationships with people outside their congregations and involvements with loftier ethical and political concerns provide Emerging Christians multiple, necessary opportunities for experimenting and implementing a newly individuated religious self.

Chapter 7, *Understanding Emerging Christianity,* not only synthesizes the broader argument of the book but also places it in contrast to common interpretations of the ECM, such as that it is merely evangelicalism in disguise, liberal Protestantism in another guise, religious consumerism, or a movement that has already run its course. We argue that the structure and practices of Emerging Christianity represent a distinctive approach to *religious individualization.* We describe the religious orientation or "self" of the Emerging Christian as "legitimate," "sacralized," and "pluralist," which is supported by congregations that facilitate a *cooperative egoism.* While labels may change, we argue that the ECM developed and will continue to persist well into the future because it is a striking manifestation of increasingly ubiquitous elements characteristic not only of the wider Christian landscape but, more significantly, of all modern religiosity.

or inactivity), it represents the most active and consistent individual accounts. These are people who made posting and engaging on Twitter regarding ECM and related issues a priority. The active monitoring of every tweet, retweet, and associated interactions and hyperlinks (most often to news sites or blog posts) provided additional information regarding issues, controversies, personalities, events, lists, and additional published pieces (both print and digital) regarding the ECM. Overall, monitoring Twitter feeds was a form of "digital ethnography" that allowed a unique window to the shape, hierarchy, and content of ECM relational networks.[27]

Finally, secondary sources with relevant observations from other scholars of the ECM were included as they became available. Some counter-texts against the ECM (or some caricature of it), usually in the form of books from Christian publishers, were also included. Counter-texts often present themselves as defending theology, especially in relation to ecclesiology and individual morality, using orthodox formulations to challenge the ECM. Since counter-texts were largely polemical in nature, they did not become the basis for understanding the ECM itself.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. Throughout this book, we refer to Ikon Belfast as a product of the Northern Ireland context. Northern Ireland, which is a part of the United Kingdom, is a contested geographical space. Many people from "Catholic, nationalist, and/or republican" (and a very few from "Protestant, unionist, and/or loyalist" backgrounds) identify with the Republic of Ireland and advocate a "united Ireland." They would often rather refer to the "north of Ireland" rather than "Northern Ireland." Without delving into the dynamics of the Troubles and present peace process, we acknowledge that it is important to locate Ikon within both UK and Ireland developments in religion.
2. The Re-Emergence Conference was held March 16–18, 2010 at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin at Belfast, and various venues in Belfast. It was organized by Rollins and billed as a launch event for his "Insurrection" tour in pubs in ten North American cities. Poet/musician Pádraig Ó Tuama and musician/artist Jonny McEwen accompanied Rollins on the "Insurrection" tour. Speakers at the conference included Phyllis Tickle, Dave Tomlinson, and Samir Selmanovic. Rollins's book *Insurrection* was published in 2011 and explored many of the themes raised on the tour.
3. Bielo (2009, 2011), Chia (2010), Harrold (2006), Lee and Sinitiere (2009), Putnam and Campbell (2010), and Wollschleger (2012).
4. Elsewhere, we locate Ikon and Rollins on the margins of the ECM. Ikon stimulates the ECM to ask questions about how far it is willing to go in its anti-institutionalism and "leaderless" aspects, while Rollins pushes the boundaries in his work on language, anti-conversionism, doubt and "a/theism" (Ganiel and Marti, forthcoming). See also Gay (2011).
5. Carson (2005) and DeYoung and Kluck (2008).
6. Many Ikon participants urged us to distinguish between Rollins's work (located within the ECM) and Ikon (which they insisted is not part of the ECM). Although Rollins has used examples from Ikon in his published work, he also has written: "Some of my friends in Ikon Belfast were dismayed by my becoming an author and talking about the group in my work. Most had never heard of the emerging church and had no interest in what was going on in the church there or in the wider world. They were worried that we might be seen as something we were not." (See comment on Stephen Keating, "Neoliberal Church?" An Und Für Sich, April 10, 2013, http://itself.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/neoliberal-church, accessed July 18, 2013). Like Rollins, we do not want to portray Ikon as something it is not. We appreciate most describe it as an arts collective, and we would not call it a "congregation" in the most common sense of the word. Nevertheless, we locate it on the margins of the ECM and include examples from it in this book because we think it illustrates what some trends in the ECM might look like, if followed to their most radical conclusions.

7. Authors' field notes were compared with a blog entry by Devin Bustin ("In an Upper Room," Peter Rollins: To Believe is Human; To Doubt, Divine, April 7, 2010, http://peterrollins.net/?p=1074, accessed June 7, 2013). We quote directly in this section at several points from his written account.
8. Published as a poem in Ó Tuama (2010: 78).
9. Published as a poem in Ó Tuama (2012: 84).
10. McKnight (2007).
11. Bielo (2009, 2011), Carson (2005), Chia (2010), Drane (2006), Ganiel (2006), Webber (2007), and Lings (2006).
12. Drane (2006: 4).
13. Gibbs and Bolger (2005).
14. Examples of those critical of the ECM include Carson (2005), DeYoung and Kluck (2008), MacArthur (2007), and Oakland (2007). Of course, this does not include numerous blog posts, newsletters, and unpublished sermons over the years.
15. Labanow (2009: 126).
16. Caputo (2007: 129).
17. Jones (2011). As is clear throughout this book, Jones is an ECM "insider."
18. Quoted in Moynagh (2012: xxi).
19. Tickle (2008, 2012). Tickle has come to be seen as an advocate for the ECM; it is little exaggeration to conclude that she sees the ECM as the future of a renewed (Western) Christianity that will ultimately prove as significant as the Reformation.
20. Tickle (2012: 112).
21. Tickle (2012: 113–114).
22. Tickle (2012: 143).
23. Tickle (2012: 35).
24. Ó Tuama, personal e-mail, June 23, 2013.
25. See Ammerman (2005) and Warner (1994).
26. Packard (2012).
27. Pew Research Center, Pentecostal Resource Page, Pew Research: Religion and Public Life Project, October 5, 2006, http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Pentecostal-Resource-Page.aspx, accessed July 23, 2013.
28. Gibbs and Bolger (2005: 331–333).
29. Lynch (2003: 78).
30. Moynagh (2012: 71).
31. Packard (2012: 9). Packard cites figures that come from Graham Clay, an Anglican bishop associated with Fresh Expressions. Moynagh is a Church of England minister who is part of the UK's national Fresh Expressions team. Moynagh's figures are similar to Clay's.
32. Engelke (2013).
33. Packard (2012: 9).
34. Association with the ECM has been documented in Anglophone countries like Australia and New Zealand as well as European countries like Germany and the Netherlands in Doornenbal (2012). More insider reports of ECM communities beyond the United States and the United Kingdom, including Latin America, can be found in Bolger (2012).
35. Packard (2012: 9–10).
36. Bielo (2011: 26).
37. The ECM has spread from evangelicalism and influenced Christians among Mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Greek Orthodox congregations. There are now emergent cohorts in every major city including Atlanta, Baltimore, Charlotte, Kansas City, and Seattle. The movement also has spawned many special interest emergent groups like Emergent Women, Globemerging, Presbymergent, and Queermergent. Since around 2005, Christian publishers have devoted entire book series, and Christian bookstores set apart entire bookshelves, for emerging products featuring bright, pop-culture echoes of style and colors. Most surprising, the spread of the movement is evident in recent moves towards recognizing "Emergent Jews" and even "Emergent Muslims."

38. See also Wollschleger (2012: 84).
39. See the description of Sanctus1's ministry run out of a bar in Manchester, UK (Edson 2006: 33) and Jesus at a Pub hosted at the Spiderhouse in Austin, Texas (Snyder 2011: 135–136).
40. Tickle (2012: 60).
41. Bolz-Weber (2012a: 52).
42. Bolz-Weber (2012a: 53).
43. Bolz-Weber (2012b: 258).
44. Snyder (2011: 135–136).
45. Snyder (2011: 136).
46. Berghoef (2012).
47. See http://www.pubchurch.co.uk/.
48. Edson (2006: 33).
49. Bakker (2001).
50. Lynch (2003: 56).
51. See chapter 7.
52. Labanow (2009: 5–6).
53. A source of ECM twitter feeds can be found using the "following" and "list" functions http://twitter.com/emergentvillage and http://twitter.com/trans4m. For more on the Internet and the Emerging Church, see Drane (2006).
54. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/emergentvillage/, accessed December 6, 2011.
55. http://www.facebook.com/groups/191109674243204/, accessed December 6, 2011.
56. http://pyrotheology.com/.
57. http://www.eastcentralministries.org.
58. Perkins (1993).
59. Some "dispersed" communities, such as the Iona Community in Scotland and the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland, are neo-monastic. Dispersed communities usually require members—who may not be able to move geographically to the site where the community is located—to identify with the ideals of the community, maintain regular contact with other members, and to return to community headquarters on a regular basis, such as once per year.
60. Moynagh (2012: xi–xiii) also argues that "new monasticism" informs the wider ECM.
61. Bielo (2011: 109).
62. Power (2007: 118–164).
63. Hurley (1998: 317–340).
64. Ganiel (2011).
65. Pagitt and Jones (2007).
66. Gay (2011).
67. Higgins locates Church Without Walls within the ECM (2013: 179–181). The Church of Scotland website has sections for "Church Without Walls" and for "Emerging Church." The Emerging Church section is linked on the site to Church Without Walls and also references the Anglican/Methodist Fresh Expressions initiative. See http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect, accessed June 1, 2013 and Drane (2006).
68. Moynagh (2012: 81).
69. Ganiel (2008: 97–99, 123–126, 2006).
70. Bielo (2009) and Wollschleger (2012). See also Marti (2005).
71. Bielo (2009).
72. Ammerman (1987) and Marti (2005).
73. Harrold (2006).
74. While from the standpoint of a "lived religion" perspective there is no singular evangelicalism in the world, we might say that the ECM crafts an imaginary other in a conservative, fundamentalist, evangelicalism as its common base of comparison and action. One of the ironies of the ECM is how it embraces the complexity of standpoints within its own community while ignoring the complexity of evangelicalism as a whole.
75. See Appendix: Research Methodology.
76. See Appendix: Research Methodology.

77. Stuart Brown, "The Without Walls Story," Without Walls Cohort, May 31, 2013, http://withoutwallscohort.wordpress.com/2013/05/31/the-withoutwalls-cohort-story-version-1-0, accessed June 1, 2013.
78. Packard (2012: 141).
79. In terms of gender, while the ECM welcomes women and has a more egalitarian ethos in the gatherings, we consistently find a greater weight toward men as speakers and as interlocutors in formal workshops and informal conversations. Thus for men, it may be speculated that the movement provides a male-oriented space that combines an opinionated bravado on spiritual matters with a nerdish vulnerability to doubt and uncertainty. In addition, while the movement is based on mostly white, urban/suburban, and middle-class constituents, there is an earnest attempt to expand that base to become more "multicultural." The movement is recently taking on transnational concerns, discovering church leaders and championing social concerns outside the United States as a means to lift themselves from an overidentification with American pop culture (McLaren 2007).
80. McLaren (2004).
81. Tickle (2012: 101).
82. See chapter 3.
83. Gay (2011).
84. Gay (2011: 6). Such experiments include the English-based radical orthodoxy movement, the liturgical movement, and the influence of ecumenical communities like Iona in Scotland and Taizé in France.
85. Gay (2011: 16).
86. Gay (2011: 93–94).
87. See chapter 7.
88. For an example of a critique of conventional Christianity through the philosophical lens of deconstruction, see Caputo (2006, 2007, 2013).
89. Fuchs and Ward (1994: 481–500).
90. Labanow (2009: 124).
91. Fuchs and Ward (1994: 483).
92. Goffman (1961: 199–201).
93. Goffman (1961: 320).
94. Goffman (1961: 199).
95. Tickle (2012: 130).
96. Bielo (2009), Packard (2012).
97. While Jones's microposting on Twitter was abbreviated, the quote provided here is the full text. Khomiakov and Kireevsky (1998: 171).
98. See Kimball (2004) and Morgenthaler (1999).
99. Packard and Sanders (2013).
100. Packard (2012).
101. Packard and Sanders (2013).
102. There is a growing stream of scholarly literature including Bielo (2009, 2011), Chia (2010), Harrold (2006), Jones (2011), Lee and Sinitiere (2009), Packard (2011, 2012), Packard and Sanders (2013), Pally (2011), and Putnam and Campbell (2010).
103. See chapter 7.
104. McCracken (2010).
105. On the concept of "haven" as a place for valuing core aspects of self-identity, see Marti (2005, 2010b) and Ganiel's (2010) application of the concept to Ikon.
106. For more detail, see Appendix: Research Methodology.

Chapter 2

1. Beck (2010: 152).
2. Packard (2012: 146).
3. Some research emphasizes that people adopt "hybrid" identities that draw on different logics simultaneously (Meyer and Hammerschmid, 2006, Rao et al., 2003, Lok, 2010).
4. Packard (2012).

5. Other scholars have noted a lack of denominational loyalty among Protestants, for example, Schwadel (2013).
6. Guest and Taylor (2006: 52).
7. Moody (2010: 501).
8. Beck (2010: 141).
9. Berghoef (2012).
10. Beck (2010: 141).
11. See Beck (2010: 68–71).
12. Beck (2010: 160).
13. Beck (2010: 41).
14. Beck (2010: 71).
15. Beck (2010: 71).
16. Beck (2010: 71).
17. Guest and Taylor (2006).
18. Labanow (2009: 48).
19. Packard (2012). Regarding cultivating affinities in congregations, see Marti (2005, 2008).
20. Packard (2012: 130).
21. Blatt (2009). See also Clark and Mills (1979) and Fiske (1992).
22. Shepherd, Douglas, and Shanley (2000).
23. Blatt (2009: 533).
24. Sluss and Ashforth (2007).
25. Clark & Mills (1979), Poppo and Zenger (2002).
26. Marti (2008: 137–140).
27. Ammerman (1997b: 208).
28. Drane (2006: 4).
29. Jamieson (2006).
30. Jamieson (2006: 69).
31. Bielo (2009: 240).

Chapter 3

1. Kathy Escobar, "rebuilding after deconstructing," Kathy Escobar: pastor. writer. mommy. advocate. rule-breaker. dreamer., April 16, 2012, http://kathyescobar.com/2012/04/16/rebuilding-after-deconstructing, accessed December 8, 2013. While the lack of capitalization is Escobar's form of writing, this is not preserved in the quotes from her post.
2. Lynch (2003).
3. Bielo (2011) and Harrold (2006).
4. Beck (2010: 16).
5. Jones discussed this in a transcribed interview with Brian McLaren.
6. See also Bielo (2009).
7. There are varying percentages across the eight emerging congregations surveyed. On the low end, only 16.5% of the respondents in one of the congregations said that their church was emergent; on the other end of the spectrum, 68.5% of the respondents in another identified it as emergent. The inconsistency is due in part with the degree to which emerging congregational leaders promote "emergent" as a salient label to describe their churches. It should be noted that 27.5% labeled their church "independent," and an additional 14.2% of respondents indicated that they were "unclear on terms" for describing their church.
8. Tickle (2012: 101).
9. Anonymous message posted on the personal blog of Brian McLaren, "Q&R: Is the Emerging Church Movement Fizzling Out?," Brian D. McLaren: Author, Speaker, Activist, April 14, 2012, http://brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/i-am-a-former-christian.html, accessed December 8, 2013).
10. Harrold (2006: 80).
11. Jamieson (2006: 69).