recommend this book to be added to the preacher's bookshelf, for someone new to preaching, Edwards' work would be helpful if read alongside the resources he mentions in his book, and also being under the tutelage of an experienced preacher.

Eddie Gibbs. *ChurchMorph: How Megatrends are Reshaping Christian Communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. 222 pp. $17.99.

Reviewed by Tom Harper. Tom is the president of the Society for Church Consulting and publisher of www.ChurchCentral.com, a church leadership blog. He is also president of NetWorld Alliance, a business-to-business publisher and Church Central's parent. He twitters on leadership issues at @TomRHarper.

Whether you consider yourself emerging, missional, mainline, or traditional, you cannot escape the context of cultural change. The western world is leaving yesterday behind at an increasing pace. This new book by Gibbs has widened my understanding of how these changes are affecting the church. Unlike some people, I am not convinced of the superiority of many new expressions of the local church. I am, however, sensitive to Gibbs' clarion call that even if you do not agree with all of these new expressions, you need to understand the transitions that are occurring.

Gibbs is an expert in understanding the intersection of contemporary cultural trends and church history. In *ChurchMorph*, he writes like a prophet-historian, casting the past, present, and future in an easy-to-follow format that explains why the church is where she is today. He clearly articulates his thesis as follows: "The morphing of the church describes the process of transformation of the church as it was, or as it exists today, to the church as it needs to become in order to engage appropriately and significantly in God's mission in the context of the twenty-first century" (18).

The first fifty pages of the book read like a college textbook—long on fact but bereft of practicality. Chapter three, however, delves into examples of "fresh expressions" of the church. This case study approach is a welcomed theme he continues throughout the rest of the book. In this work, Gibbs justifies his position by pointing out that churchgoers shop around more than ever. Denominational ties in childhood have less impact on which churches people attend as adults. People cross over between liturgical and contemporary expressions of worship, sometimes stepping over the same boundary lines several times throughout their lives.

While Gibbs did an excellent job summarizing the major forces morphing the church, I discovered very little new material here. The five "megatrends" noted in the book's subtitle and addressed in the work include:

1. From modernity to postmodernity—The Enlightenment was characterized by reason and logic; the new postmodernity is characterized by eclectic truth based on personal preference.
2. From the Industrial Age to the Information Age—He writes, "Churches shaped by the big-business models of the industrial age, with their centralization of power and dependent accountable branch offices, struggled to interpret the different entrepreneurial climate of the information age" (22). Gibbs criticizes most denominations for falling into the trap of top-down authority and not adjusting to a culture that demands decentralization.
3. From the Christendom era to Post-Christendom contexts—He declares, "For the church to morph into a post-Christendom context, it will need to adopt a different approach to ministry—from attraction to incarnational presence in the community. The Christian church is no longer in a privileged position in the culture" (26).
4. From Production Initiatives to Consumer Awareness—This somewhat vague phrase refers to the shift from mass production of consumer goods to specialized manufacturing in response to the individual needs and preferences of an increasingly picky society. This consumer mindset has bled into the church. Like consumers in the modern marketplace, churchgoers leave or switch churches much more readily than they did fifty years ago.
5. From Religious Identity to Spiritual Exploration—Though traditional religion (in the form of mainline churches) has declined, spiritual interest has increased, with a migration toward independent churches or denomination-switching altogether. He illustrates, "Perhaps the most significant development has been among those who consider themselves 'spiritual' but who do not identify with any institutional expression of Christianity" (28). Such people customize their faith by adopting the beliefs and traditions of different eastern religions, mixing them with select pieces of the Christianity they grew up with.

One of the more interesting aspects of the book is Gibbs' comparison of the two most recent movements in the western church: emerging and missional. He writes, "In my view the missional church movement's theological grounding and cultural insights need to be linked with the emerging church's missional

engagement in specific contexts for their mutual enrichment" (36). Gibbs seems to believe that the spiritual exploration megatrend is giving rise to many of the emerging churches that are "becoming increasingly ecumenical" (37) and engaging in a "postmodern celebration of ambiguity and diversity" (38).

It is difficult to tell where Gibbs stands on the issue of new church models versus traditional church models. He appears to vacillate between two extremes; however, he does finally offer an interesting opinion: "I believe there is mounting evidence to demonstrate that some of the most innovative, and potentially most enduring and significant, 'fresh expressions' of church are found within the inherited denominations. I say this because they have the potential to influence the traditions that have birthed them, helping them transition from their Christendom mindset to engage the missional challenges of a post-secular society" (84). So, the reader is left with a list of the strengths and weaknesses of the emerging and missional movements, their histories and their differences.

The remainder of the book addresses several mini-trends observed by Gibbs, summarized below:

1. Clusters—A new generation of neighborhood-based small churches act as hyperlocalized cultural centers, connected to other clusters as part of a larger church identity. The clusters are typically made up of thirty to fifty people that find a specific group to serve, such as students, young adults, business communities, families, and the elderly.
2. Multicultural trends—Gibbs stresses the United States will become the first non-European western nation consisting of large numbers of Latinos, African-Americans, and Asians.
3. Marketplace practices—The church is responding to the market forces of culture. For example, Lawndale Community Church in Chicago founded the Lawndale Christian Health Center, which sees over 12,000 patients a year. It also launched the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation to enrich the community through housing improvements and educational services. Another example includes Quest Church in Seattle, Washington. Quest created Q Café. Gibbs notes, "They wanted to explore the viability of operating successfully by applying kingdom values in the marketplace" (132).
4. Church/Parachurch collaboration—More churches are partnering with parachurch ministries than ever before. The trends of outreach into urban and multicultural environments, plus the new expressions of local churches, have forced churches to turn to mission agencies and ministries to gain new insights and learn new skills.

5. Resurgent monasticism—Gibbs observes, "Today, contemplative orders provide a corrective to the hyper-activism and materialism of contemporary Western societies. They are oases of calm and repose that are proving immensely popular with people seeking to wind down and refocus, as they make time to recover from their adrenaline addiction" (137).
6. Expanding networks—Gibbs believes missional entrepreneurs are fueling a growing number of independent church planting initiatives. He lauds these new church networks because they are free to innovate and take risks, noting, "They are liberated from the institutional controls that can frustrate and shackle a new generation of leaders" (85).

Gibbs implies there is a growing desensitivity toward the fads of modern ecclesiology: purpose-driven, emergent, missional, mosaic, etc. *ChurchMorph* is an excellent survey of how the fads intersect and where they came from. New generations traditionally shed the thinking of their forefathers in search of new ideas and a unique identity. The church will continue to morph with the culture around it. New trends are coming. And whatever they are, the next trend will attempt to correct all the others before it. This is the rhythm of the church in a morphing culture. This is the nature of a decaying world in constant motion, waiting for the return of the One who will make everything new again.

Stetzer, Ed and Dodson, Mike. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too*. B&H Books, 2007. 224 pp. $17.99.

Reviewed by Keith Stone. Keith is a professor of pastoral ministries at Shasta Bible College in Redding, California, where he also serves as Vice President of Student Life. He has also been a pastor for forty years and is presently pastoring Shasta Community Church near Redding.

Stetzer and Dodson have surveyed over three hundred comeback churches that made a significant transition. Their research is thorough, almost too detailed, and the footnotes testify to a discipline of study that guarantees accuracy. Throughout the book, Scripture underscores every step that put these comeback churches on the road to recovery.

The reliability of the research also echoes a ring of hope on nearly every page. Church transformation, the authors agree, is neither guaranteed nor ever easy. But this book underscores that such transformation can happen to any church that is declining or reached a plateau. The level of hope within the pages of this book