This book is important. Whether you are aware of the emergent/emerging church (like the authors, I will not distinguish between the two) or not, you will benefit from book.

This book is a good primer on the emergent/emerging church. The emergent/emerging church is not every megachurch with fancy lights and casual attire. Too often “emergent” is plastered on everything that is innovative, modern, or different, just like “charismatic” used to be plastered on everything that was non-denominational. The emergent/emerging church is a particular movement that claims to be post-conservative and post-liberal Protestant. They, or at least some of their main spokespersons, reject propositional truth (doctrine), the exclusivity of the gospel message, the substitutionary death of Christ, and shy away from clear stances on homosexuality and eternal damnation.

What is more likely to be seen in their literature are words like community, authenticity, inclusion, conversation, dialogue, postmodernism, faith journey, uncertainty/doubt, justice, missional, et al. The movement is a new expression of a lot of old thoughts. It really is not post-
liberal; rather, it seems to be a hippie rendition of liberal Protestantism with a good dose of Social Gospel.

So why is this book so important? Because although many are not acquainted with the primary theologians of the movement, a lot of young people are being influenced by popular expressions of emergent/emerging doctrine in books like Donald Miller’s *Blue Like Jazz* and Rob Bell’s *Velvet Elvis*. I loved *Blue Like Jazz*. I think Donald Miller is a great writer, and he made me laugh out loud on an airplane. If you can appreciate good writing, you ought to read it. I thought *Velvet Elvis* was a strained metaphor and Rob Bell a wannabe. (He seems to have become whatever it was he was wanting to be. He pastors one of the fastest growing churches in the world, Mars Hill, Grandville (Grand Rapids), Michigan, and is the creator of the wildly popular and incredibly creative mini-films marketed under the label Nooma.)

But one thing is for certain: I would never recommend *Blue Like Jazz* to a young adult or teen, especially one who is struggling with their faith. I wouldn’t recommend *Velvet Elvis* to anyone. Though Miller may not identify himself as emergent, he articulated one of the main tenants of their belief: doubt, uncertainty, and “journey” is a good thing. Although many may not adopt the emergent/emerging teachings across the board, they may adopt the vocabulary and many of the ideas that seem noble while not fully understanding the ramifications. And if someone likes *Velvet Elvis*, thinking it is innovative and edgy, he could easily be pulled into other things that may seem fresh without fully understanding the implications.

DeYoung and Kluck tackle the emergent/emerging church head-on. They come from strong
Reformed, Evangelical backgrounds and dismantle a good deal of the emergent/emerging philosophy and doctrine—assuming that one believes the Bible is the final authority. They defend the necessity of propositional truth as laid out in the Bible and proclaimed by Christians for 2,000 years. They also attack the idea that doubt/uncertainty is somehow a virtue. They also show how the emergent/emerging church is not really as postmodern as they claim and how the modern church was not nearly as modern as it is supposed.

In addition to its theological contribution, the book is well written. Parts of the book, especially the introduction (written in two parts, one for each author), equal the style, craft, and humor of Blue Like Jazz. It is a great book.