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**Reed, Randy** (2016) Review of "Radical Theology and Emerging Christianity: Deconstruction, Materialism and Religious Practices" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 31(3) pp.430-432 [DOI] 10.1080/13537903.2016.1206268  
Version of Record Available @ ([www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com))

In the United States and England, a fascinating movement in Christianity is the “Emerging Church.” A movement that started in the late 1990’s, it has reached an important level of popular and academic interest. The Emerging Church is often characterized as being politically progressive, liturgically experimental and theologically innovative. However, certainly one of the most interesting aspects of the Emerging Church movement is the revival of the “Death of God” theology. Katharine Sarah Moody’s book “Radical Theology and Emerging Christianity” delves deep into this intriguing aspect of the Emerging Church.

The death of God has a long history stretching back to Nietzsche and the 19th century philosophers. It gained popularity in the 1960’s with the “Death of God” movement popularized by Thomas Altizer and John A.T. Robinson’s book “Honest to God” and given public notice when Time magazine’s cover in 1966 asked (in bold red letters) “Is God Dead?” However with the rise of the Evangelicalism in the 1980’s and the megachurches in the 1990’s and the concomitant decline of mainline denominations (Robinson was an Anglican Bishop) the death of God theology receded into the background.

More recently, however, Death of God theology, now more often called “Radical Theology” has returned in the work of two Emerging Church lights, Peter Rollins and Kester Brewin. But Rollins and Brewin are ultimately very dependent on the work of two other thinkers: Derridian theologian John Caputo and Marxist Lacanian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. Thus when one reads the work of Rollins and Brewin one gets the tip of a very large pair of icebergs: Derridian postmodernism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, mediated first by Caputo and Žižek and then by Rollins and Brewin. What the first half of Sarah Moody’s book does is attempt to dig deep into the icebergs and examine what Caputo and Žižek are really about. This is an inestimable service. Both Caputo and Žižek are prolific writers employing very sophisticated theoretical structures. For those who are interested in this branch of the Emerging Church movement, Sarah Moody provides an important and accessible introduction to these two thinkers.

What Sarah Moody shows in her first section is that Caputo and Žižek have very different visions, and yet they are not completely at odds with each other. While each has taken their shots at the other Sarah Moody shows that in reality there is a coherent whole that can be weaved from their work. In her introduction she makes it clear when she states “[I will] make the

case that a *Caputian atheism is the proper framework for a Žižekian fighting collective.*"(1, italics orig.) What Sarah Moody's project here is then to make a contribution by showing that the Emerging Church discourse that arises from these two thinkers can be a more or less faithful combination of these two thinker revolving precisely around the death of God.

To that end, what Sarah Moody shows is that one cannot really understand what this branch of the Emerging Church without understanding these two intellectual progenitors. But while simply doing this much would be a great service, Sarah Moody goes further to then carefully examine the work of Brewin and Rollins. Now with the theoretical apparatus of Caputo and Žižek in hand, she can now bring out the elements of their radical theology within this larger framework.

It is then in her second section where she examines the various more well known aspects of the radical theology stream in the Emerging Church. She examines the work of Ikon, the liturgical performance art group that Rollins was a part of in Belfast. She inspects Rollins notion of "faithful betrayal" and his more controversial ideal of "suspended space" where all identity is (temporarily) eliminated in the liturgical venue and Brewin's idea of "Pirate Islands" which subvert the mutu of capitalism and religion. In each of these she ends the chapter with a series of questions which indicate places where Rollins and Brewin have issues that remain unresolved.

What Sarah Moody implies then is that a careful examination of the discourse surrounding the radical theology stream of the Emerging Church shows promise and yet also a certain amount of failure. What Sarah Moody recommends instead is a series of practices that come from the combined discourse that she uncovers. The book then functions profitably in two ways: for those trying to catch up with radical theology Sarah Moody offers a first rate primer. But for those engaged in radical theology in the church, Sarah Moody offers a theological direction that comes from the kind of clear understanding of the discourses in play in the Emerging Church.

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