

Suggested Reading in Missional Church

David J. Bosch (*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1991, ISBN 0-88344-719-3), has set the theological basis for the discussion of a new paradigm for the missional church. This comprehensive book is somewhat daunting but richly rewarding. Now in its fifteenth printing! Almost everyone who writes on the Missional Church quotes Bosch.

Lesslie Newbigin (*Foolishness to the Greeks*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1986; *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Eerdmans, 1989; *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*, Eerdmans, 1991; *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Eerdmans, 1978, rev. ed. 1995), combined his experience as a missionary in India with years of teaching new missionaries at Selly Oak College into a helpful analysis of the state of the church in the West (Europe and North America). He brings the same intentional cultural studies that missionaries to 'foreign lands' employ to bear on our own culture. His work has inspired the efforts of members of the Gospel and Our Culture Network such as Lois Barrett, Inagrace Dietterich, Darryl Guder, George Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder.

Darrell L. Guder (ed), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1998, ISBN 0-8028-4350-6) has brought together a number of excellent and connected essays on the state of the church in North America and practical steps toward becoming a Missional Church. An essential book in this period of transition. Recently Guder has added an important book to the discussion of the Church in our modern North American society with *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1998, ISBN 0-8028-4703-X)

Rodney Clapp, (*A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*, Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1996, ISBN 0-8308-1990-8) is an Episcopalian with a deep appreciation for the Anabaptist movement. His very readable book offers a complementary and supportive view of the Missional Church as described by Guder and his colleagues. Highly recommended reading.

An important book discussing the biblical background to the concept of Missional Church is Gerhard Lohfink's, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Fortress, 1982, ISBN 0-8006-1802-5). Lohfink opens up what it means to be church as community which lives in mutual accountability and love. Great background information for the discussion of ecclesial practices.

Ronald J. Sider (of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* fame) has teamed up with a group out of Eastern University here in Philadelphia to write an important book on the Missional Church from a very clearly evangelical perspective. Check out your neighbors at *Churches That Make a Difference*.

Brian D. McLaren (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2004) is one of the newest contributors to the Missional Church conversation. He often teams up with Alan J. Roxburgh (*Reaching a New Generation: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church*, Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1993) in discussion around the Emerging Church. Both of these practitioner/scholars are deeply engaged in ministry with Post Modern young people.

Lois Barrett edited a survey of developing missional congregations and with her team developed a series of patterns and indicators of what missional churches (will) look like. The other contributors to the book read like a who's who of missional church leaders and consultants. (*Treasure in Clay Jars*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 2004).

Thomas R. Hawkins, (*The Learning Congregation: A New Vision of Leadership*, Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997, ISBN 0-664-25699-6) blends a mastery of change theory and good biblical reflection into a how-to guide for leaders who are facing an ever-increasingly changing world. In today's world no one person can know all that is needed to know to manage the change we are facing. Hawkins shows how churches must organize for change or be swept away in the flood. His ideas are picked up in a number of recent works from the Alban Institute. Highly recommended reading.

Another book by Thomas Hawkins that is attracting great interest these days is *Cultivating Christian Community*, Nashville, Discipleship Resources, 2003, ISBN 0881773271). Hawkins will be the keynote speaker at the Center for Parish Development's 2007 Convocation in Chicago (July 26-28, 2007 - <http://www.missionalchurch.org>) For more of their recommendations on books see: <http://www.missionalchurch.org/resources/books.html>.

It is sometimes hard to read some of the books about the future of the church without getting discouraged. Martin B. Copenhaver, Anthony B. Robinson and William H. Willimon (*Good News in Exile: Three Pastors Offer a Hopeful Vision for the Church*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1999, ISBN 0-8028-4604-1) offer their pastoral perspectives on what God is calling the church to become. Dip into this book when the others get a bit heavy.

William H. Willimon teamed up earlier with Stanley Hauerwas (*Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People who Know that Something is Wrong*, Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon, 1989, ISBN 0-687-36159-1). This was one of the first books to note that life in the church would be less and less life in the mainstream of American life and more and more "Life in the Christian Colony". Widely quoted by others.

Since then a number of writers have pointed back to Hauerwas' work as an important starting point for thinking about the future of the church--even if some (like Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Trinity Press, 1995, ISBN 1-56338-193-1) don't know just what to make of Hauerwas!

Hall has introduced a vast number of people to the concept of Christendom. Another important writer on the end of Christendom has been Loren B. Mead, former head of the Alban Institute. Mead popularized this whole area of discussion with his famous book, *The Once and Future Church*. Since then he has written a number of follow-up books including *Transforming Congregations for the Future* (Bethesda, Maryland, The Alban Institute, 1994, ISBN 1-56699-126-9). This book includes a number of facts and figures which are useful in setting out some of the challenges facing the traditional church in North America. A good place to begin--but don't stop here!

*Prepared by Bill Reinhold
Presbytery of Philadelphia, 2006*