

1-1-2006

A Frightening New World/A Hopeful New World: An Annotated Bibliography

Douglas A. Foster
dfoster@acu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Foster, Douglas A. (2006) "A Frightening New World/A Hopeful New World: An Annotated Bibliography," *Leaven*: Vol. 14: Iss. 4, Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol14/iss4/8>

This Resource Guide is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leaven by an authorized editor of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu.

A Frightening New World/A Hopeful New World: An Annotated Bibliography

DOUGLAS A. FOSTER

As Leonard Allen highlights in his article “The Future of the Restoration Movement,” today’s thought world is vastly different from the one that gave birth to the Stone-Campbell Movement and Churches of Christ. Church leaders struggling to understand this new world and respond in godly ways are faced with a daunting body of literature that both defines and embodies this new situation. Though not claiming to be comprehensive nor implying endorsement of all ideas presented, this annotated bibliography is a starting place to help chart the main contours of this frightening and hopeful new world. The materials are organized into six sections that roughly parallel Allen’s main points.

I. THE NEW WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE

Braaten, Carl, and Robert W. Jensen, eds. *The Strange New World of the Gospel: Re-Evangelizing in the Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

The editors contend that most “unbelievers” in America and the West were actually brought up in church but no longer believe. The task of the church in the postmodern/ post-Christian world is to “re-evangelize.” Nine scholars representing major-Christian traditions examine ways the church can relate the gospel to this new world.

Greer, Robert C. *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.

A gripping introduction and survey of the church’s major options in understanding postmodern thought. Using four twentieth-century Christian thinkers as the basis of his study (Francis Schaeffer, Karl Barth, John Hick, and George Lindbeck), Greer shows the modernist concept of “absolute truth” as an enemy to the Christian faith. He moves, however, toward a new concept of absolute truth and way of doing Christian theology that he labels post-postmodernism.

Lukacs, John. *At the End of an Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Renowned historian John Lukacs examines evidence that the Modern Age is ending, especially the widespread questioning of its two central notions—the certainty of scientific knowledge and the principle of Progress. His provocative approach challenges both conservatives and liberals, creationism and evolution. He concludes with the argument that the historical appearance of Christ upon earth is the most significant event in the universe.

II. THE RATIONAL ROOTS OF THE STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT

Allen, Leonard, and Danny Gray Swick. *Participating in God's Life: Two Crossroads for Churches of Christ*. Orange, California: New Leaf Books, 2001.

Allen and Swick begin with the fascinating story of the 1856 Tolbert Fanning-Robert Richardson controversy. Fanning, whose theology was completely shaped by Baconian common sense philosophy, was unable to acknowledge that he held any philosophical presuppositions. He accused the more “mystical” Richardson of skewing the gospel with philosophy. Allen uses the story as a springboard for appealing to Churches of Christ to embrace trinitarian theology as central to spiritual formation and a corrective to the negative implications of our rationalistic past.

Bozeman, Theodore Dwight. *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Ante-Bellum American Religious Thought*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.

For three decades Dwight Bozeman has been one of the premier historians of Puritan history and thought. In this seminal book he describes how the Baconian theory of knowledge created the assumption that correct biblical interpretation was a “scientific” enterprise. This idea became almost universal in early nineteenth-century America. Bozeman uses the Presbyterian Church as his case study, yet readers will easily see the massive influence of the ideas on Alexander Campbell’s Restorationist program.

Hughes, Richard T. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Hughes’s monumental history of Churches of Christ describes the nineteenth century origins of the Stone-Campbell Movement and how those origins shaped us in the twentieth. Contrasting the Campbellian rationalistic and Stoneite “apocalyptic” understandings of the church and the world, Hughes masterfully tells the stories of how the rationalistic tendencies largely triumphed.

Allen, Leonard. *Unseen Things: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*. Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood, 2004.

This book represents a more fulsome development of the ideas put forth in Allen’s essay published in this issue of *Leaven*. Eight trenchant essays orient readers to the largely modern philosophical and theological formation of Churches of Christ, offering ideas for moving responsibly into the twenty-first century.

III. CHRISTIAN UNITY AS A CORE VALUE

A. Unity as Understood in the Stone-Campbell Movement

Callen, Barry L., and James B. North. *Coming Together in Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way to Christian Unity*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997.

A compelling call and theological rationale for churches traditionally opposed to participation in “ecumenical” activities to embrace ecumenism—though questioning modernist presuppositions of the Ecumenical Movement. The book draws from the dialogue between members of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and the Church of God (Anderson, IN) in the 1980s and 1990s.

Foster, Douglas A. “The Struggle for Unity During the Period of Division of the Restoration Movement: 1870-1900.” Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1987.

The author examines the early ideas of Christian unity in the Stone-Campbell Movement and in American Christianity, demonstrating how four very different understandings of unity were behind the two divisions that tore this unity movement apart in the twentieth century.

Foster, Douglas A. "The Face of Christian Unity." *Christian Standard* (February 6, 2000): 4-6.

The first in a series of four articles examining the major foci of the Stone-Campbell Movement during its two hundred year history, Foster examines the complexity of the concept of unity in the face of current church realities. He identifies areas that have been key to a healthy understanding of our responsibilities to work for the visible unity of the church—areas that do not require a rigid rational consensus.

Shelly, Rubel. *I Just Want to be a Christian*. Revised edition. Nashville: 20th Century Christian, 1986.

A landmark book that challenged sectarian exclusivist assumptions of Churches of Christ through an examination of the theology of Christian unity from the Stone-Campbell heritage. Though modern in approach and assumptions, the book opened the way for understandings of the church that countered traditional exclusive conceptions yet maintained continuity with the history of the Movement.

Shelly, Rubel, and John O. York. *The Jesus Proposal: A Theological Framework for Maintaining the Unity of the Body of Christ*. Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood, 2003; and Rubel Shelly and John O. York. *The Jesus Community: A Theology of Relational Faith*. Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood, 2004.

In these two books, Shelly and York call for unity among believers based not on modern rational understandings of the gospel, but on a personal relationship with Christ and with all who have such a relationship. In *The Jesus Proposal* the authors assert that the "postmodern" atmosphere of the twenty-first century can foster relational unity in Christ that is greater than theological agreement, ecclesiological structure, and institutional loyalty. *The Jesus Community* describes how a church might live out the vision described in the first book.

B. Unity as Understood in the Larger Context of Christianity

Meyer, Harding. *That All May be One: Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

An experienced leader in the Ecumenical movement, Meyer describes the shifts away from institutional ecumenism that have taken place among churches worldwide. In two major sections he first describes the wide range of understandings of Christian unity that exists today, then surveys the proposals for how unity can be lived out by Christians and churches.

IV. THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRADITION—REEXAMINING SELF-UNDERSTANDINGS

A. In the Ongoing Life of the Stone-Campbell Movement

Allen, C. Leonard, and Richard T. Hughes. *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1988.

Allen and Hughes challenge the anti-historical attitude common in American thought and Churches of Christ, showing the potentially devastating implications of such an attitude when applied to our self-understanding. Beginning with the Protestant Reformation, the authors trace the major streams of thought that have profoundly shaped Churches of Christ.

Childers, Jeff W., Douglas A. Foster, and Jack R. Reese. *The Crux of the Matter: Crisis, Tradition, and the Future of Churches of Christ*. Revised study edition. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2002.

Beginning with a description of the postmodern world, the authors examine the biblical, historical, and theological factors that have shaped Churches of Christ through the last two centuries. They show how these very factors can be the basis for embracing the challenges of our new world. The book points out the strengths we have enjoyed and the temptations we have faced, then concludes that the core value of Christianity—the cross of Christ—must be the determinative force that shapes our future.

B. Tradition in the Larger Context of Christianity—Post-Evangelical

Middleton, J. Richard, and Brian J. Walsh. *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.

This book is a vivid introduction to postmodern culture and philosophy with a withering critique of modern assumptions about reality. The collapse of modern thought, the authors contend, actually provides tremendous potential for Christians to speak the gospel in a way that provides a radical word of hope and transformation.

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

The postmodern shift has resulted in a longing among many believers for the richness of early Christianity. This impulse is seen in a return to new forms of classical understandings of the church, the Eucharist, and baptism as powerful and mysterious. Webber has since published other books with the “ancient-future” motif, including *Ancient-Future Worship* (video 1999), *Ancient-Future Evangelism* (2003), and *Ancient-Future Time* (2004).

Webber, Robert. *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.

In many ways a history of Evangelicalism in the twentieth century, Webber describes three phases that he labels “traditional evangelicals” (1950-1975), “pragmatic evangelicals” (1975-2000), and “younger evangelicals” (2000-present). He describes the shifts from the rational worldview of the traditionalists, to the therapeutic understanding of Christianity of the pragmatics, to the younger evangelicals’ longing for a return to the ancient emphasis on the church as community. Highly visual and technologically adept, these younger believers have a commitment to the poor, multicultural churches, and intergenerational ministry.

C. Tradition in the Larger Context of Christianity—PostLiberal

Frei, Hans W. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

Frei can be called the father of “postliberal” Christian theology. He contends that in the Enlightenment the narrative reading of scripture that had previously defined the world was overturned when modern theologians imposed their world on the Bible. Both liberals and conservatives approached the Bible with these modernist assumptions, but Frei’s chief critique is against the liberal enterprise. He urges the re-appropriation of scriptural narrative as the basis for theology.

Lindbeck, George A. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

Lindbeck critiques the most widely held understandings of religion as “cognitive propositionalism,” which sees doctrines as pointing to objective realities, and “experiential expressivism,” which views doctrine as representing inward experiences. His chief criticism is toward the second, the orientation of liberal theologians. In his proposed “cultural-linguistic” model, religion’s significance is not located primarily in propositional truths but in “the story it tells and in the grammar that informs the way the story is told and used.”

V. NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHURCH

Barrett, Lois Y., ed. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Using the characteristics described in Guder’s *Missional Church* (see below), eight researchers sought out congregations that embodied these ideals—including biblical formation, risk taking, worship as a public witness, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and giving themselves to the community. The result is a series of compelling stories of actual congregations that are practicing these patterns and becoming missional churches.

The Gospel in Our Culture Network. <http://www.gocn.org/>

The network was begun to help American church leaders respond appropriately to postmodern (post-Christian) shifts that have moved the church out of its privileged position. It is a place for Christian leaders and groups who want to collaborate with others who share similar concerns. Seven years of the Network’s newsletter are available online, as well as information about national conferences and the formation of local groups to help Christians engage people with the gospel.

Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

As the influence of the church continues to decrease, North America is now more than ever a mission field. The contributors to this seminal work argue that the church cannot respond to this new reality as long as it views mission as a program of the church. Instead, mission must be the very definition of the church—God’s people sent into the world. The book’s purpose is to assist church leaders in moving congregations away from institutional maintenance to truly missional design and definition. The book describes twelve characteristics of a missional church.

Jacobsen, Douglas, and William Vance Trollinger, Jr. *Re-Forming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Emerging from a larger project of the same name, this series of essays challenges the “bipolar myth” that twentieth-century American Protestantism essentially divided into liberal/mainstream and fundamentalist/evangelical camps. Essays treat a range of church bodies, including one on Churches of Christ. The editors argue that seeing American religious bodies as related to a “center” (not clearly defined in the book) would alleviate the negative polarizing effects of the two-party thesis.

Jenkins, Michael. *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context*. New York: Oxford, 1999.

Beginning with the reality of the dramatic decline of mainstream Christianity in Europe and America, Jenkins struggles to re-define the church by looking at it from a series of divergent angles. Each view illuminates something about the church the others do not. Jenkins begins with the proposition that the church’s “impending death” may release it from concern over its own fate so that it can truly follow Christ. The question he seeks to answer is, “Is there life after death for the church?”

Kimball, Dan. *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

In an iconoclastic mode, Kimball rejects traditional methods of evangelism—including the “seeker sensitive” model—as largely ineffective in reaching emerging generations. These anti-Christian, antichurch, post-Christian people represent one of the largest mission fields in the world. Kimball, however, does not simply propose a new model. Instead he takes readers through a fast-paced tour of the massive changes that have occurred in society in the last centuries. In the second part of the book the author proposes a range of possibilities for churches to be truly missional, including helping people connect with the ancient disciplines of the church—one part of “vintage” Christianity.

Love, Mark, Douglas A. Foster, and Randall J. Harris. *Seeking a Lasting City: The Church's Journey in the Story of God*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2005.

Described as a “narrative ecclesiology,” the authors depict the church not as an institution that derives its legitimacy from conforming to lists of “marks of the true church,” but as the embodiment of God’s work in the world—the continuing story of God’s love. The book makes this point by recounting biblical and historical stories, concluding with theological challenges for Churches of Christ to continue “seeking a lasting city” rather than assume we have already arrived.

McLaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

One of many books by Brian McLaren, the “father” of the emergent church movement, which embraces the exhilarating possibilities of abandoning the modern worldview and its constraints on Christianity. In this book he relates a fictional dialogue between a burned out conservative minister and a science teacher, which leads to new understandings of scripture and the church. Also notable is his 2004 book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, which celebrates the richness of the varied Christian traditions.

Miller, Donald. *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*. Nashville: Nelson, 2003.

This is the intimately introspective story of Miller’s journey from a vague superficial evangelical faith, to a successful ministry that again left him feeling far from God. The last experience finally drove him away from traditional “institutional” Christianity to a faith focused on a more culturally relevant intimacy with Jesus.

Minatrea, Milfred. *Shaped by God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Defining mission as “the purpose of inviting and equipping individuals to be authentic disciples of Christ,” Minatrea writes of twenty-first century congregations that are moving from maintenance to missional churches. While not proposing models for other churches to copy, the author does list nine essential practices of missional churches that include having clear but high expectations for membership, being authentic, and teaching to equip people to serve—not just to know facts. The final section provides strategies for helping a church become missional.

Reno, R. R. *In the Ruins of the Church: Sustaining Faith in an Age of Diminished Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002.

The church in the twenty-first century is in a state of ruins. Far from a disaster, however, the ruin of the church and the suffering it brings to Christians is forcing believers closer to Christ and real faith. Reno contends that conservatives and liberals alike have been bound by the modernist notion that we must sepa-

rate ourselves from whatever is ruined or defective. The author insists, to the contrary, that we must remain in the ruins of the church and “suffer divine things.” Through this loyalty to the church, daily prayer, and engagement with scripture Christians in this postmodern world can experience true intimacy with Christ.

VI. HOW OUR TRADITION CAN SERVE US WELL IN THE POSTMODERN AGE

Allen, Leonard, and Lynn Anderson, eds. *The Transforming of a Tradition: Churches of Christ in the New Millennium*. Orange, California: New Leaf Books, 2001.

Fourteen younger church leaders in Churches of Christ write about the changes taking place in this heritage and ways we can respond appropriately to the new world in which we live. Topics range from our understanding of the church and our heritage, to worship renewal, instrumental music and becoming missional churches. The writers are all committed to maintaining continuity with their past as they strive to remain faithful to God and his mission in the world.

Childers, Jeff W., and Frederick D. Aquino. *At the River's Edge: Meeting Jesus in Baptism*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2004.

An excerpt from the larger Christological study, *Unveiling Glory* (ACU Press, 2003), this study booklet functions as an introduction to baptismal theology for non-Christians and Christians alike. The authors show the central role of baptism in shaping our very identity as Christians. The decision to be baptized cannot be taken lightly, for it involves a deadly vision—dying with Christ—and being utterly changed. Furthermore, this does not happen in isolation, but in community.

Hicks, John Mark. *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord's Supper*. Orange, CA: New Leaf Books, 2002. In one sense Churches of Christ have held a high view of the Lord's Supper, insisting on its weekly observance. Yet Hicks believes that the way we have understood and experienced it is very different from the way the early church did. Through biblical, historical, and theological analyses, Hicks proposes that we should approach the Supper not as altar, which fosters a sense of individualism, solemnity and sorrow. He insists, rather, that “table” is the most appropriate metaphor, with its accompanying sense of community, joy, and gratitude.

Hicks, John Mark, and Greg Taylor. *Down in the River to Pray: Revisioning Baptism as God's Transforming Work*. Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood, 2004.

The doctrine and practice of baptism has been a cornerstone of Churches of Christ, and the authors insist that must continue. They contend, however, that despite our emphasis on baptism we need more teaching on it. Hicks and Taylor take readers through a rich biblical, historical, and theological journey examining baptism and its significance for individuals and the church.

Hughes, Richard. *Reclaiming a Heritage: Reflections on the Heart, Soul and Future of Churches of Christ*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2002.

Moving beyond the story told in his *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, Hughes brings together eight essays delivered or published in various places, to explore implications of our history for the twenty-first century. Among strengths he identifies our focus on scripture, our emphasis on the unity of Christ's church, and our sense of standing against the values of the world. Yet our restorationist impulse has often tempted us to become arrogant and exclusive in attitude and has tended to blind us to important social and moral issues such as racism. Hughes calls for a re-appropriation of an “apocalyptic” world view seen in leaders like Barton W. Stone and David Lipscomb.

Noll, Mark A. "Rethinking Restorationism—A Review Article." *The Reformed Journal* 39 (November 1989):15-21.

A remarkable review of four 1988 books on restorationism and Stone-Campbell history by one of the premier historians of American Christianity. Noll shows that while authors Leonard Allen, Richard Hughes, and Michael Weed (contributors to one or more of the books reviewed) launch serious critiques of the restoration ideal as understood and embodied by Churches of Christ, they also demonstrate the "nobility of restorationism" and its potential for Christian renewal.

DOUGLAS A. FOSTER teaches church history at Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas.

