

Re-Mind & Re-New

Renewal in North American Christianity

January 17-18, 2012

Why the theme of renewal?

- Church renewal conversation a recurring one in church history, grown hot again
- At PTS, renewal process underway
 - In a discernment time regarding new vision and mission statements
 - Vision: to be a generously minded seminary fostering the renewal of Christianity and a more just and loving world
 - Mission: to educate communities and their leaders in the Way of Jesus



Our first Re-Mind & Re-New Conference

- Replacement for Ministers' week
- Romans 12.2 "Do not be conformed...be transformed"
- Shared perspective: Post-Christendom
 - Loren Meade's division of eras in Western Christian history
 - Missional Church
 - Emergent Church
 - The New Monasticism



Speakers and Worship Leaders

- Craig Van Gelder
- Nadia Bolz-Weber
- Chris Haw
- Diana Butler Bass
- Worship

- Emily Bowen
- George Young
- Jose Morales



For this webinar

- An introduction to a book the speaker has written and my sense of what we can expect from this speaker at R&R (this is NOT a preview of what you can expect them to say!!)
- Stimulate our thinking on what the “renewal of Christianity” might mean.

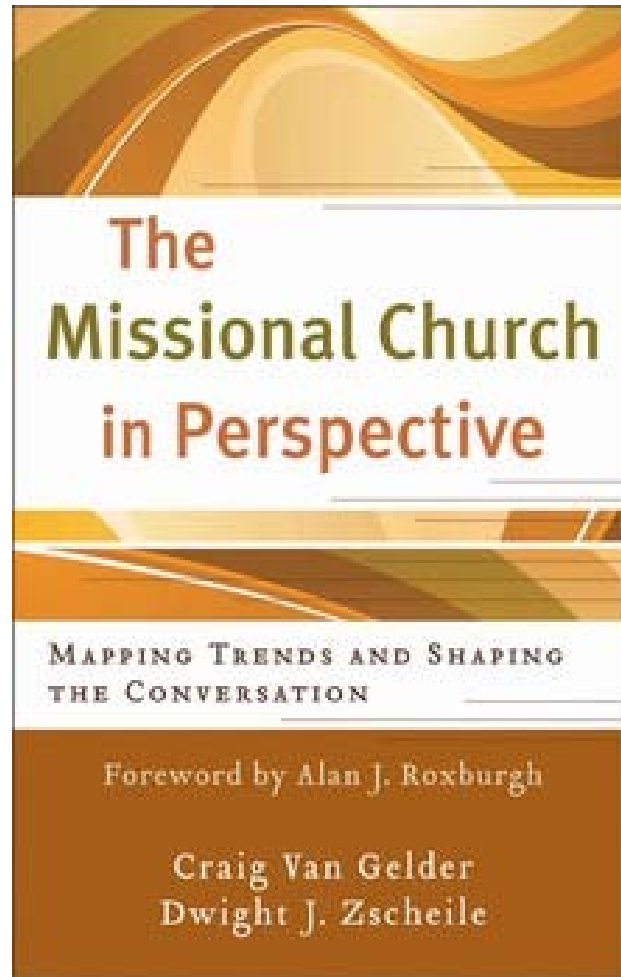




**Missional Church: Craig Van
Gelder**

Professor of Congregational
Mission, Luther Seminary

The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation



Craig's scholarly work

Editor of the Missional Network Series, books which “seek to reclaim more fully the identity of the church in order to better inform its purpose and ministry and aid the church in participating more fully in God’s mission within our dramatically changed context.”

(frontispiece)



What we can expect from Craig: theology, Trinity, and reign of God

- The church does not *have* a mission, the church exists *for* a mission, for God's mission.
- “the missional church conversation...focuses on God as a *sending Triune God*.” 27
- Focus on the relational trinity, *perichoresis* of the Cappadocian fathers, as expressed by a contemporary Orthodox theologian such as John Zizioulas.
 - “Humans are not pale imitations of God's eternal rationality and power but rather find their identity in participating communally in the divine community's life and love as well as in one another's lives. Such a view provides a much richer basis for engaging relationally in mission than the focus on imitating Jesus...” 108
- The reign of God: shift from an emphasis on individual salvation only to God's mission in and to the world, with our response being shaped as disciples to participate with God in God's mission.

This book further develops the arguments of *Missional Church*

- Collaborative volume, published 1998, with this perspective:
- The church in North America is now located within a dramatically changed context.
- The good news of the gospel announced by Jesus as the reign of God needs to shape the identity of the missional church.
- The missional church with its identity rooted in the reign of God must live as an alternative community in the world.
- The missional church needs to understand that the Holy Spirit cultivates communities that represent the reign of God.
- The missional church is to be led by missional leadership that focuses on equipping all of God's people for mission.
- The missional church needs to develop missional structures for shaping its life and ministry as well as practice missional connectedness within the larger church.

Quoted from pp. 49ff

Relationship between gospel and culture

- The Gospel and Our Culture Network
(www.gocn.org)
- “[M]issional church will at times be at odds with all forms of human government, it can baptize none, and it will reject the role of trying to recreate society in its own image (a role that both liberals and conservatives have embraced)” 140-41



Needed: imagination and participation

- “Missional church is a habit of mind and heart, a posture of openness and discernment, and a faithful attentiveness both to the Spirit’s presence and to the world that God so loves.” 149



Leadership

- Requires a participatory leader: “Participatory leadership for the missional church is grounded in the premise that the church finds its identity in participation in God’s mission in the world, and that it is primarily the Holy Spirit who leads Christian communities.” 155



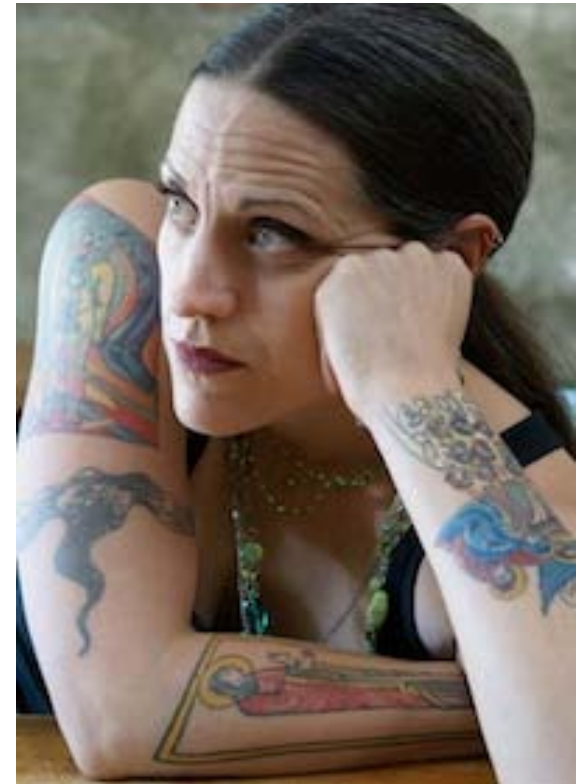
Missional church—theology guiding action

- Agency of the sending, triune God
- The reign of God is the end game, not the church.
- The church is called to be sign, instrument, and foretaste of the reign of God, and it is a place for the Spirit to equip human beings as disciples who can participate with the Spirit in God's mission in the world.
- Your thoughts?

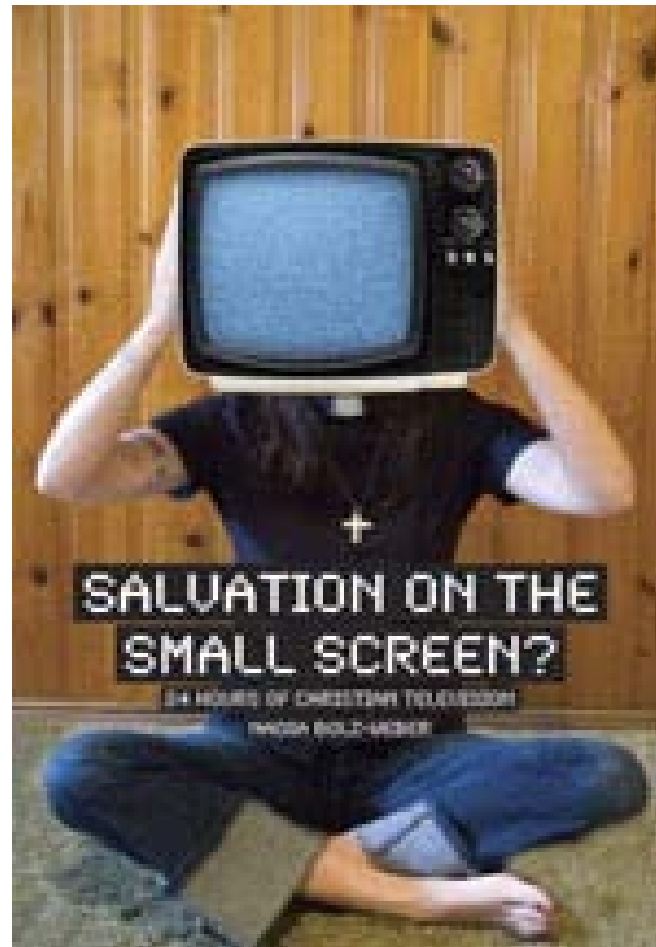


Emerging/Emergent Church: Nadia Bolz-Weber

- Pastor, House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver
 - www.houseforall.org
 - www.sarcasticlutheran.com



Book: Salvation on the Small Screen: 24 Hours of Christian Television



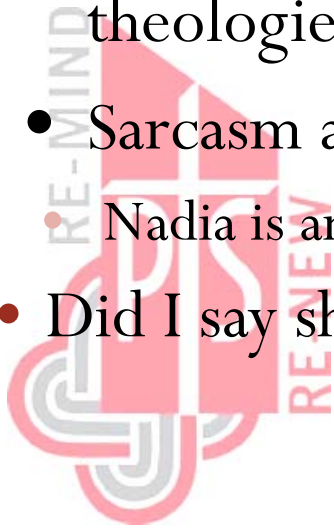
Premise:

- Two Christianities in the U.S.:
 - Group A
 - Group B
- “What happens when you take someone from Group A and expose her to twenty-four hours of Group B in the form of an entire day and night of Trinity Broadcasting Network?” 3



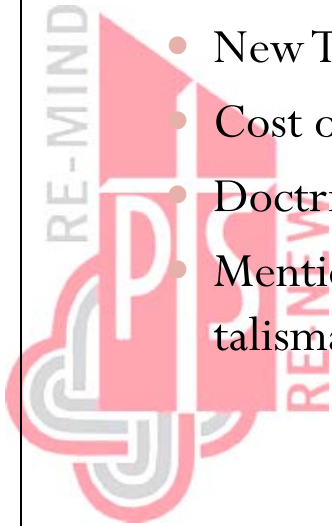
Theological Perspective: *Simul Iustus Et Peccator*

- Simultaneously saint and sinner (thus the name of the community she serves, and everyone is both saint and sinner!).
- God can do good through all kinds of sinners and theologies.
- Sarcasm and generosity!
 - Nadia is an erstwhile standup comic
- Did I say she is Lutheran?



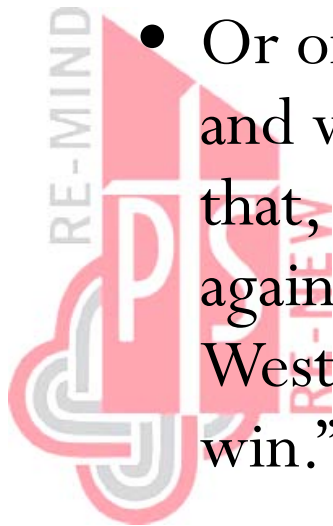
What she did...

- Friends in shifts
- Recording both shows and the conversations
- Roundup at the end of each chapter
 - Number of Old Testament passages cited
 - New Testament passages cited
 - Cost of products offered
 - Doctrine of God
 - Mentions of Jesus—especially if there was content or just mentioned as a talisman (magical object or lucky charm)



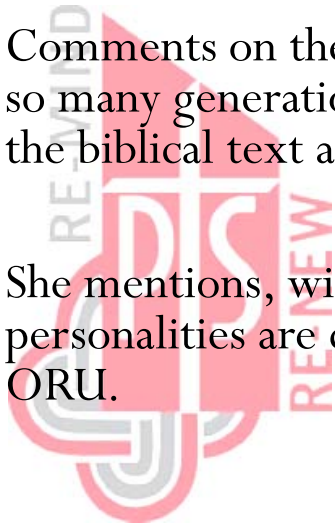
Some examples of her “findings” and reflections

- Paula White, who is lining out everything one must bring to God in order to be well-received, prompted this from one of Nadia’s listening friends:
“Wow...God is so needy. I’ve had girlfriends like that.” 14
- Or on who God is, after *John Hagee Today*: “Sovereign, and with some pretty specific requirements of us that, if unfulfilled, will cause God to not protect us against the terrorists and thus bring down all of Western civilization and the Muslim extremists will win.” 38



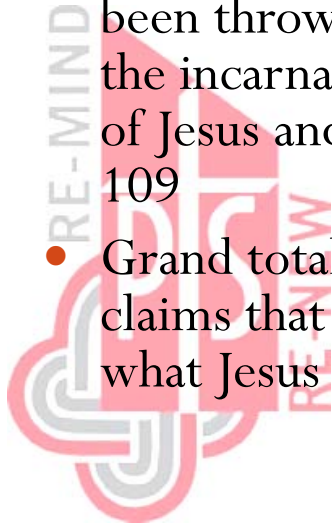
More...

- “As a Lutheran I reject wholesale the gospel of prosperity, primarily on the grounds that I’m pretty sure it makes Jesus throw up a little bit every time he thinks of it.” 67
- “They all seem to be preaching to the disempowered, and I’m not really their target audience. Maybe these sermons that seem like self-help sprinkled with a few Bible verses, basically Oprah meets Jesus, really do help the powerless feel emboldened to claim some sort of control in their lives.” 25
- Comments on the use on TBN of the Amplified Version of the Bible: “This ‘Bible’ is so many generations removed from the Greek text that it’s about as closely related to the biblical text as is the *Farmer’s Almanac* or the latest issue of *Cosmo*.” 28
- She mentions, with more sarcasm than generosity, that nearly all of the on air personalities are called doctor because they were granted honorary doctorates by ORU.



And one more...

- One of fundamental issues/questions: using Christian as an adjective. “What seems to qualify as Christian is that which is clean, smug, overly groomed, socially conservative, and above all wrapped in super-duper positive thinking.” 83
- Jesus as talisman. “I’m amazed at the almost total disregard for Christ’s teachings on TBN. In all the scripture references over the past fourteen hours, there has been very little mention of Jesus. Sure, his name has been thrown around like a talisman....But no one seems interested in the incarnation, life, teachings, ministry, passion, cross, and resurrection of Jesus and what those things tell us about who God is and who we are.” 109
- Grand total of sales offers for the day: \$7909.62 on the “network that claims that it ‘doesn’t show commercials, but inspirational nuggets about what Jesus is doing.’” 161



What might this book indicate about Nadia as an emergent church leader?

- Category bending, if not breaking
- Rooted in tradition, but not in a conventional way—maybe there is a parallel between re-purposing, salvage work, re-sale shops, and emergent Christianity.
- Sharp wit plus compassion, except no compassion for bad theology!
- Creative
- Your thoughts?



Chris Haw and the New Monasticism

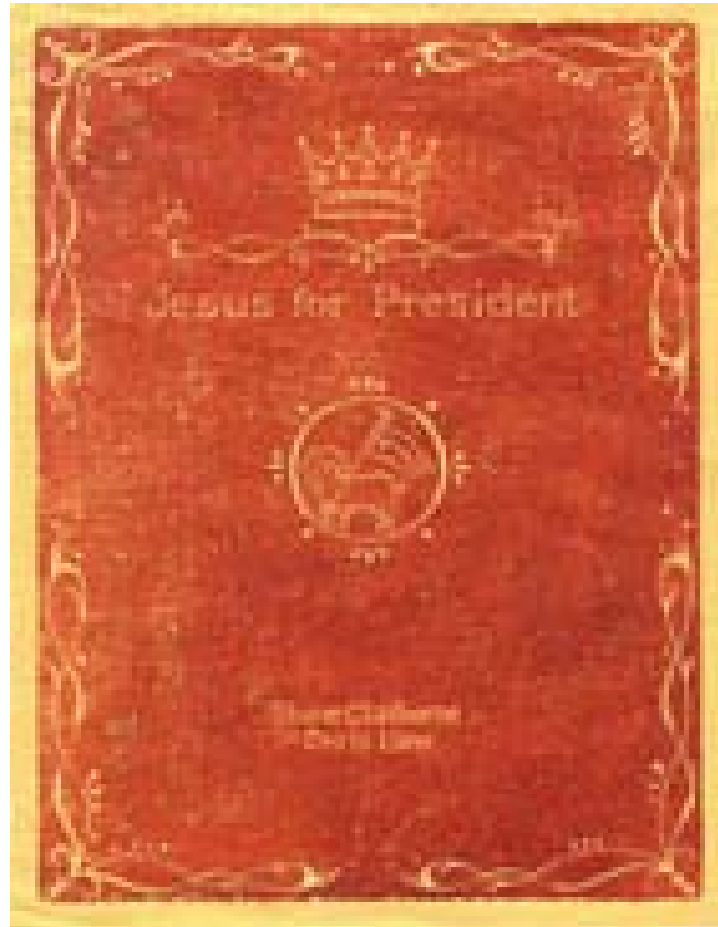


Chris Haw (and Cassie)

- <http://chrishaw.blogspot.com>
- <http://chrishawlabor.com>
- Potter, recycler, carpenter, member of East Camden Community, blogger and theologian

Jesus for President: Politics for Ordinary Radicals

- With Shane Claiborne



Major Theme: “Come out from among them...”

- 17



This book is a project in renewing the imagination of the church in the United States and of those who would seek to know Jesus. We are seeing more and more that the church has fallen in love with the state and that this love affair is killing the church's imagination. The powerful benefits and temptations of running the world's largest superpower have bent the church's identity. Having power at its fingertips, the church often finds "guiding the course of history" a more alluring goal than following the crucified Christ. Too often the patriotic values of pride and strength triumph over the spiritual virtues of humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love.

Ice cream and manure

- “As our brother and fellow activist Tony Campolo puts it, ‘Mixing the church and state is like mixing ice cream and cow manure. It may not do much to the manure, but is sure messes up the ice cream.’” 20
- Akin to Roger Williams on the state corrupting the church (the original Baptist position)

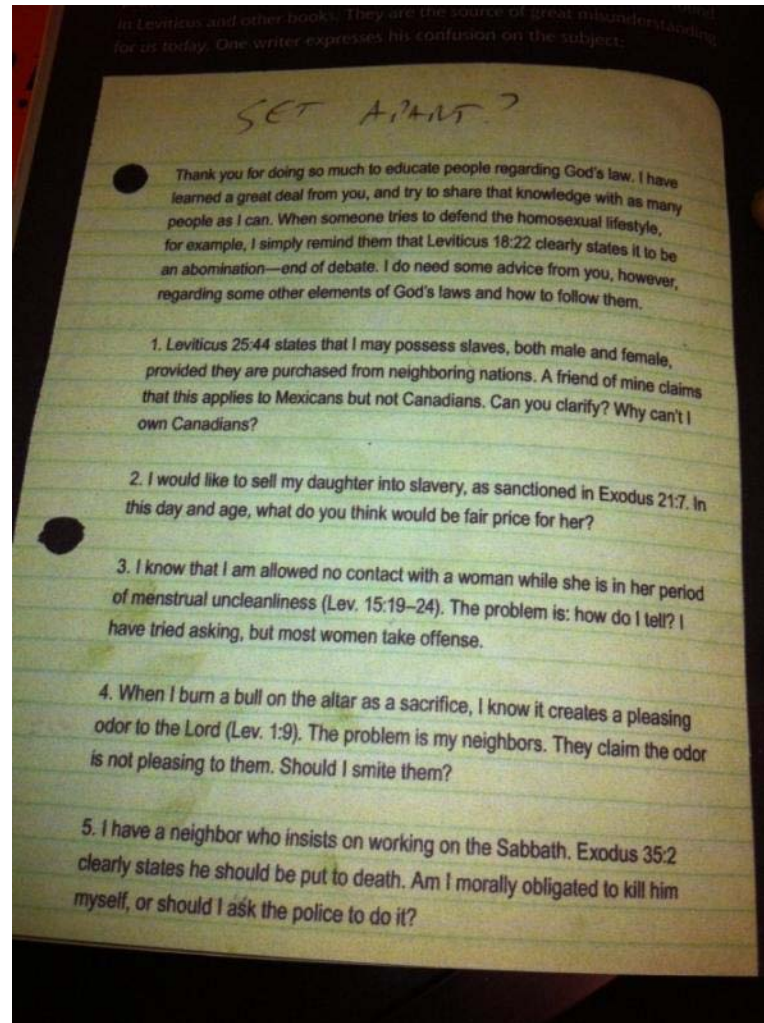


Whose empire?

- Strong contrast between mission of God in the world and Empire. A nation like other nations, with a king who acts as other kings, or a set-apart people?
- And set apart for what? They quote Garry Wills at length, *What Jesus Meant.* (next slide)



From *What Jesus Meant*



A contrast of imperial rules

- Jesus, Christians, and Empire.
 - Kingdom of God is also Empire of God.
 - The coronation of an emperor has the exact order of events that Jesus' trial before Pilate had.
 - "...among the book of Revelation's many messages is a clear message to believers: come out of that maddening whore of an economy that is pillaging the world." 155
 - Caesar was also called savior and was said to be born of a virgin.
 - *Evangelion* was the good news an emperor circulated in the realm.
 - Jesus' "commencement speech" in Nazareth as told in Luke 4 signals a jubilee year, an anti-imperial economy.



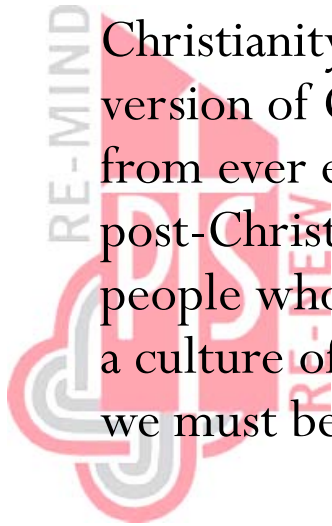
Occupy?

- “Giving your life away does not sound like a good plan for national security. As old troubadour Woody Guthrie sang, ‘If Jesus preached in New York what he preached in Galilee, we’d lay him in his grave again’ (especially if he did it on Wall Street).” 95



Some examples of what they propose

- Time is ripe for a new exodus, which happens about every 500 years.
- “We share a sneaking suspicion that the economic future of the church may have more in common with the Amish than with the activist’s organic, fair-trade latte.” 193
- “Much of the world now lies in the ruins of triumphant and militant Christianity. The imperially baptized religion created a domesticated version of Christianity—a dangerous thing that can inoculate people from ever experiencing true faith.... Our hope is that the postmodern, post-Christian world is once again ready for a people who are peculiar, people who spend their energy creating a culture of contrast rather than a culture of relevancy. If we are to be relevant to the world we live in, we must be relevant nonconformists.” 240



An illustration



Chris Haw and the new monasticism

- Desire for power through controlling the state and for being the dominant culture has sullied the church.
- Create alternative communities, economies, and Christian practices.
- Resistance and peacemaking, using resources of the New Testament and pre-Constantinian Christianity.
- Your thoughts?



Diana Butler Bass and After Religion



- *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith and The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church.*

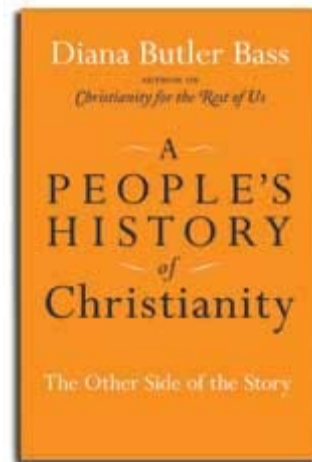
New book February 2012

- *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*
- From her blog at www.patheos.com:
(<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/dianabutlerbass/2011/10/28/putting-the-protest-back-in-protestant/>)
- We are in the middle of a new spiritual awakening ... an awakening that moves beyond religious institutions and follows the movement of the Holy Spirit into new expressions of being Christian. This is a space to explore the terrain of politics, culture and spiritual practices in light of this historic spiritual era.



Book for today

- *A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story.*

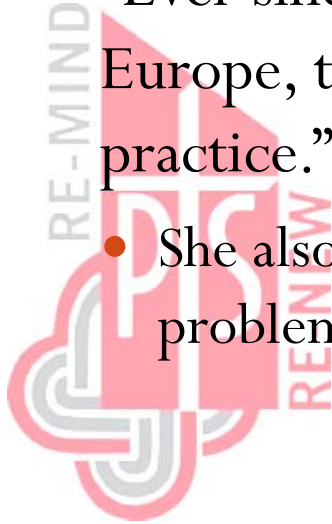


An (not terribly) alternative reading of Christian history

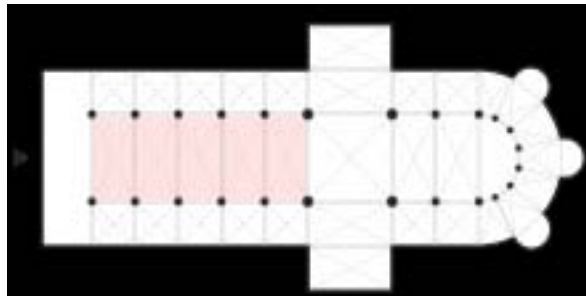
- Contrast story to “Big-C” Christianity: Christ, Constantine, Christendom, Calvin, and Christian America 4
- The different story is “a story of generative Christianity, a kind of faith that births new possibilities of God’s love into the world. Whereas militant Christianity triumphs over all, generative Christianity transforms the world through humble service to all. It is not about victory; it is about following Christ in order to seed human community with grace.” 11
- Militant Christianity versus generative Christianity, living out the Great Command
- Great Command Christianity. “It is an attempt to find the history of the prophetic Jesus in the church, the Jesus who spoke for the poor and oppressed, who broke bread with sinners, who wanted his followers to know live fully, who inspired people to give up all and follow him, and who believed—even when dying on a cross—in a world of justice, beauty, and love.” 17
- Traces teachings on tolerance, compassion, non-literal interpretations of scripture.

Stories you might not find elsewhere in standard histories

- Appreciation for the Middle Ages, parallel to our betwixt and between time.
- Reading the Bible in the vernacular and peasant revolts during the Reformation.
- “Ever since Christianity become the majority religion in Europe, the church found toleration a difficult virtue to practice.” 249
- She also highlights the Enlightenment and democracy as problematic in Big-C Christianity



Church of St. Martin's in Biberach, Germany



And where does the trajectory of the story point?

- “Sociologists, philosophers, and historians now agree—in surprisingly uniform fashion—that the West has entered some new stage of modernity, hypermodernity, or postmodernity. In the decades since 1945 Western society and culture—and the Christian religion along with it—have been transformed not in degree but in kind. Nothing is as it was. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman refers to the contemporary condition as ‘liquid modernity,’ where everything ‘solid’ has melted away.” 291
- Her hope: “The practice of Christian ethics is subtly becoming a vision of justice through universal hospitality, in other words, that the whole world will be made right through the boundless welcome of all to God’s table.” 302
- “Because Great Command Christianity seeks not its own way, it has been harder to detect in history, but it is there. It is the undertow of those quiet souls—some named, many unnamed—who have made the world a better place, as Jesus so instructed.” 309

Closing

- Which shapes will post-Christendom Christianity take in North America?
- Which movements or renewal movements are movements of the Spirit in which we need to be equipped to participate?
- How do the movements and ways of thinking represented by missional church, emergent church, and the new monasticism either challenge or inspire us in our own circumstances and in our walk as Christians?
- In what ways is Christianity in need of renewal, and how should a seminary such as PTS foster that renewal?

