

Models of Church and Mission: A Survey

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The church of Jesus Christ is a multidimensional mystery. It is a mystery first of all because it participates in the mystery of the Trinity, the mysteries of salvation and of Jesus' incarnation and redemptive work, and the mystery of God's sovereign reign.

The church is also a mystery because its course through history is ambiguous. The church has been different and even contradictory things over time, with differing measures of faithfulness and unfaithfulness.

It is not surprising therefore that the Bible gives no neat definition of "church." Instead it offers a wide range of images.¹ Four of the most basic are people of God, body of Christ, community of the Spirit, and community of Jesus' disciples. Over time, many other images and models have emerged, in theory or in practice.

This essay is a sorting-out exercise. It surveys the profusion of church models and images today and in history. I profile a range of models of the church and, relatedly, models of mission, of church-in-mission, and of renewal or revitalization. The aim is to identify models that may help facilitate discussions at the 2010 consultation on revitalization in Edinburgh, Scotland, sponsored by the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements.

The overview presented here, though selective, gives a vivid sense of the abundance of current ecclesial models. The sources utilized cover a spectrum from popular to academic. The survey draws mainly on sources in English and so should be supplemented by material from other languages and cultural contexts.

Why use models? Avery Dulles gives a fine rationale in his influential book, *Models of the Church*.² As Dulles and others have noted, models have been widely used in science, in art, literature, music, and history, and in such fields as economics, sociology, and anthropology. Their main advantages are two: They help illuminate mystery, and they have both a theoretical and a practical aspect. Models typically carry implications for action or application, or further research.³ Applying the methodology of models is also useful in identifying hidden assumptions in theology, as in other fields.

Models are parabolic or analogical. They do not fully explain the mystery but do illuminate important aspects, often through metaphor. No model is fully comprehensive or exhaustive; a range of models which can be compared and contrasted is useful.

Writers on church and mission commonly articulate their own preferred model or models. Some books for example propose a sacramental model of the church, or a house-church model, or some other. Similarly with regard to models of mission. In this overview I focus mainly on authors who compare multiple models, or who propose comprehensive models that incorporate most of the issues and tension points within ecclesiology and missiology.

¹ Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Westminster, 1960).

² Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Doubleday, 1974); Expanded Edition, 1987; cf. Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Doubleday, 1985). I also give an introduction to models in *Models of the Kingdom* (Abingdon, 1991).

³ Models also have a number of limitations, as discussed in the literature.

I. Models of the Church

Unendingly, it seems, “new models” or “paradigms” of the church pop up. People ask: What new form will the church take as society shifts and new challenges emerge?

Although the proliferation of models continues, perhaps there is really only a fairly small number of truly distinct ecclesial models. On examination, most “new” models turn out to be one of three things: 1) a renewed focus on the early church, 2) an updating or rediscovery of neglected traditional models, or 3) the baptizing of some new fad in business or society.

The most useful models embody a clear concept that can be concisely stated; have some connection with church history, illuminating perennial points of tension; and can easily be compared with other models in a set. These are the features that made Dulles’ *Models of the Church* so appealing.

Historians and theologians have used dozens of ecclesial images—the church as sacrament, servant, liberator, exiles, complex organism, or an echo or image of the Trinity, for example. More colloquially, the church has been called a hospital, an army, a social club, and so forth.⁴ Historically, ecclesial traditions have often been classified by polity: *Episcopal*, *Presbyterian*, or *Congregational*—terms with biblical roots. In the sociology of religion the *sect-church typology* has been widely used and debated, with many mutations and elaborations.⁵ Comparative ecclesiology commonly mentions these various categories and constructs.

The following several elaborations of models seem particularly fruitful for current discussions.

Dulles, *Models of the Church*

Dulles’ *Models of the Church* was prompted by the ecclesiological ferment before and after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The original 1974 edition elaborated five models:

- The Church as Institution
- The Church as Mystical Communion (People of God)
- The Church as Sacrament
- The Church as Herald
- The Church as Servant

The first three reflected contemporary Roman Catholic ecclesiological studies; the last two Dulles associated primarily with Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Under “Mystical Communion” Dulles speaks of the church as the “People of God,” noting that

⁴ Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King*, rev. ed. (InterVarsity, 2004), especially chapters 2, 3, 5; Snyder, *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* (InterVarsity, 1983), chapters 4-7; Howard A. Snyder with Daniel V. Runyon, *Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ’s Body* (Baker, 2002); Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Eerdmans, 1998); J.-M.-R. Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion* (Liturgical Press, 2001).

⁵ Summarized in Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Zondervan, 1989), 39-40, as one of seven interpretive frameworks for studying revival and renewal movements (discussed below); see also Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Univ. of California Press, 2000). H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Henry Holt, 1929), is still insightful in this regard.

this was the “principal paradigm of the Church in the documents of Vatican II” and has more obvious biblical roots than does “Mystical Communion.”⁶ It is helpful therefore to think of Dulles’ second as People of God.

Dulles was not fully satisfied with these five models. In his 1987 revision he added, as a last chapter, another: The Church as Community of Disciples. He noted that this is a more explicitly New Testament model than the other five.⁷

Dulles’ six models—Institution, Mystical Communion (People of God), Sacrament, Herald, Servant, Community of Disciples—are still useful both as models and as windows into ecclesiological history.

Interestingly, Dulles took only passing note of Lesslie Newbigin’s emerging ecclesiological work; he quoted from Newbigin’s 1953 study, *The Household of God*.⁸ The brief reference is understandable, since Newbigin’s major contributions would come later. The title of Newbigin’s book, *Household of God*, itself identified a model with rich biblical roots. Within this model Newbigin noted three main types: Congregation of the Faithful, Body of Christ (with emphasis on the sacraments), and Community of the Holy Spirit. Newbigin associated these in a general way with Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Pentecostalism.

Newbigin’s tripartite model reflects perhaps more of a Christendom mindset than does his later work, though he already noted “the breakdown of Christendom” as part of the contemporary context. He suggested that these three ecclesial types, “far from being mutually exclusive,” would actually be affirmed by most Christians, and “an infinite variety of combinations of and approximations to” the three can be found. He also wrote, significantly, that “a Church which has ceased to be a mission has certainly lost the *esse* [being or essence] and not merely the *bene esse* [well-being] of a Church.”⁹

Donald Durnbaugh, *The Believers’ Church*

In 1968 Donald F. Durnbaugh published *The Believers’ Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism*.¹⁰ The book is an important study in ecclesial models. It documents a tradition often overlooked in systematic ecclesiology, locating the Anabaptist and Free Church tradition within the broader scope of ecclesiology and church history.

Durnbaugh presents a visual model (p. 31) that maps all the various church traditions, including Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and varieties of Protestantism, highlighting various tensions and polarities. His model employs a triangle whose points are Word, Spirit, and Tradition (correlated with Sermon, Revelation, and Sacrament, and

⁶ Dulles, *Models* (1987), 53.

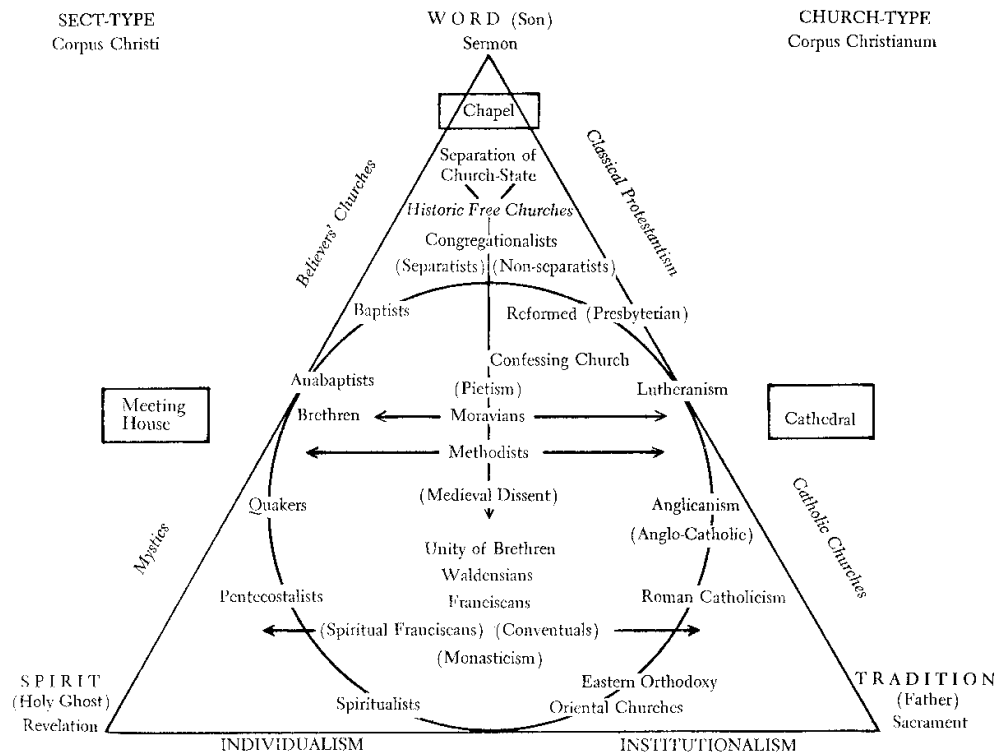
⁷ “The preceding chapters [elaborating the initial five models] do not constitute a rounded systematic ecclesiology. Rather, they are intended to identify the main trends in twentieth-century thinking about the Church.” Dulles, *Models* (1987), 204. “Community of Disciples” was added to give a more rounded view.

⁸ Dulles, *Models* (1974), 80; (1987), 85-86.

⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (Friendship Press, 1954), 2-4, 24, 163. “Household of God,” based on *oikos*, also implicitly suggests Newbigin’s ecumenical concerns (*oikoumene*).

¹⁰ Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers’ Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (Macmillan, 1968). Durnbaugh has separate sections on the Waldenses, Unity of Brethren, Swiss Brethren, Hutterites, Baptists, Quakers, Church of the Brethren, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Plymouth Brethren, and the Confessing Church in Germany.

heuristically with the Trinity) and includes also the church–sect typology and other tension points (See below). Durnbaugh’s inclusive model can helpfully be compared with Dulles’ and Newbigin’s (early) models, as well as others.



Durnbaugh's Model of Church Types

From *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* by Donald Durnbaugh. Copyright © 1985 by Herald Press, Scottsdale PA 15683. Used by permission.

Nikolaus von Zinzendorf's *Tropus Ecclesiology*

Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), the German Lutheran who became the leader (bishop) of the Renewed Church of the Moravian Brethren, developed an elaborate ecclesiology as he worked with the Moravians. Zinzendorf attempted to integrate a strong emphasis on community (the congregation as “the little flock of the wounded Lamb”) with a comprehensive view of the universal church—the worldwide “Congregation of God in the Spirit,” adapted by the Spirit to different national and cultural contexts.

Utilizing the Greek term *tropoi paideias* (“methods of training”), Zinzendorf argued that the one true church takes different forms in different places. As summarized by Hamilton and Hamilton, Zinzendorf believed

that the evangelical churches were one in essentials but that each possessed its own special talent for training souls in accordance with its traditions. Hence there should properly be a Lutheran, a Reformed, and a Moravian “trope”—later even a Methodist—within the Unity of Brethren [*unitas fratrum*], so that souls would be

educated for eternity in conformity with the peculiar emphasis of each. For no one church alone had the exclusively correct method in the cure of souls¹¹

Zinzendorf eventually came to believe that the true church included all the major traditions, even Roman Catholicism. He viewed the Moravians as a specialized missional *tropus* raised up by the Spirit to renew and unify the whole church.

Zinzendorf's *Tropus* theory is an expansion and adaptation of the *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* idea that was prominent in Continental Pietism. Pietist cells (*collegia pietatis*) were *ecclesiolae*, "little churches" within the larger *ecclesia*, used by God as cells of renewal. Zinzendorf came to see the Moravians as an *ecclesiola* in a larger sense, within the whole church, for the triple purpose of renewal, unity, and missions.

This presupposed a conception of the different denominations as each having positive value but none having all the truth. Each was a *Tropus*, a unique member of the larger body of Christ. Using analogies from "the manifoldness of life and revelation," Zinzendorf argued that "we must regard variety of thought as something beautiful." In each *Tropus*—Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, even Roman Catholic—the Lamb was preparing his flock for full participation in the one universal church. Uncharacteristic of his age, Zinzendorf saw both validity and value in the variety of denominations and traditions—even as he saw them as transitory, intended to lead God's people to a greater unity. He thus radically relativized the claims of all denominations while also affirming their value, for "in the plurality and multiplicity of the various schools [i.e., *tropoi*] of Christ's religion lies one of the deepest intentions of God."¹²

Because of these views Zinzendorf has sometimes been labeled an ecumenical pioneer.¹³ He may also be seen as a forerunner of what today is called missional contextualization or inculturation.

Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* summarizes seven ecclesiological traditions, each embodying a somewhat different model. The book also discusses several contemporary ecclesologists and a range of "contextual ecclesiologies."¹⁴

Kärkkäinen's seven ecclesiological traditions or historic models:

- The Church as Icon of the Trinity (Eastern Orthodox)
- The Church as the People of God (Roman Catholic)
- The Church as Just and Sinful (Lutheran)
- The Church as Covenant (Reformed)
- The Church as the Fellowship of Believers (Free Church)
- The Church in the Power of the Spirit (Pentecostal/Charismatic)
- The Church as One (Ecumenical)

¹¹ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Church in America, 1967), 101-02.

¹² Summarized from Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 141-46.

¹³ A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer* (Westminster, 1962).

¹⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (InterVarsity, 2002).

This is useful as comparative ecclesiology. The typology is more comprehensive and inclusive than Dulles' or Newbigin's, though it has a noticeable gap. Anglican and Wesleyan ecclesiologies do not fit naturally into any of these seven categories. John Wesley, in particular, developed a sort of hybrid ecclesiology that drew upon most of the traditions Kärkkäinen identifies, especially early Eastern writers and Continental Pietism, yet was distinctive.¹⁵

Following this historical overview, Kärkkäinen summarizes the ecclesiologies of seven contemporary ecclesiologists: John Zizioulas, Hans Küng, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, James McLendon Jr., and Lesslie Newbigin. The "contextual ecclesiologies" he profiles in the third section of the book, mainly through a few examples, are the Non-Church Movement in Asia, Base Ecclesial Communities in Latin America, Feminist Church, African Independent Church ecclesiology, the Shepherding Movement's Renewal Ecclesiology, "A World Church," and The Post-Christian Church as "Another City." Though not fully comprehensive (see below), this section gives a good sense of worldwide ecclesiological ferment today.

Kärkkäinen's study may be compared with Bernard Prusak's book, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology Through the Centuries*. Prusak deals almost exclusively with Roman Catholicism and does not present models as such. However he discusses a wide variety of ecclesial images including the church as Assembly of God (*ekklesia*), Cosmic Body of Christ, Mystical Body, Worshiping Community, Sacrament of Unity, and Priestly People of God.¹⁶

Somewhat broader in scope is *The Church: Its Changing Image through Twenty Centuries*, by Eric Jay.¹⁷ Craig Van Gelder's *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* is something of a complement to Prusak's book since it deals more with Protestant ecclesiology and has an insightful discussion of denominationalism. His chapter on "Historical Views of the Church" illuminates key shifts in ecclesiology.¹⁸

A Miscellany of Models

My own writing employs a variety of models and mapping. In *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* I explore four "liberating models": The church as Sacrament, as Community, as Servant, and as Witness. More fundamentally, I suggest the fruitfulness of the concepts of *economy* and *ecology* (based in part on *oikonomia*) for understanding the church and its relationship to God's kingdom. I propose an organic/ecological model of church life, highlighting the ecological interplay of *worship*, *community*, and *witness*.¹⁹

The primary model in *Community of the King* is the church as the Community (*koinonia*) of God's People (*laos*). The book's 2004 revision includes a chapter on models of the church since 1975 which summarizes Liberating Models, Pentecostal and

¹⁵ Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 208-22; Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (InterVarsity, 1980).

¹⁶ Bernard P. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology Through the Centuries* (Paulist, 2004), especially 270-312.

¹⁷ Eric Jay, *The Church: Its Changing Image through Twenty Centuries* (John Knox, 1978).

¹⁸ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Baker, 2000).

¹⁹ Snyder, *Liberating the Church*, Sections I and II.

Charismatic Models, and the church as Image of the Trinity.²⁰ Organic/genetic models are explored in Snyder and Runyon, *Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ's Body*. This book includes a discussion of the church as a Complex Organism, utilizing insights from chaos and complexity theories.²¹

Different traditions or “styles” of worship reflect differing ecclesiological assumptions. My essay “The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology” distinguishes four varieties of evangelical worship which I call Anglo-Catholic, Revivalist, Pentecostal-Charismatic, and Rock Concert. I trace the history of each, showing how evangelical worship was shaped successively by Catholicism, revivalism, Pentecostal and Charismatic influences, and more recently by the popularity of rock music, so that rock concert patterns have emerged as a liturgical form.

Most evangelical worship recognizably embodies one or more of these four types, or blends them. The liturgical roots here are mainly European and North American, but these patterns are now easily recognizably globally, especially in urban areas.²²

A Marks of the Church Model

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD) affirmed the church in terms of four “marks” or “notes” (*notae*): unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity (*ecclesia una sancta catholica et apostolica*). These are understood to be the church’s essential identifying characteristics. Over time other marks have also been stressed, but the four classic marks continue to be widely accepted, however interpreted.

Examining these marks in the light of Scripture, however, gives one pause. Viewed biblically, the four traditional marks appear incomplete and one-sided. Theologically, the classic formulation seems biased toward hierarchical, unitary, and homogeneous models. A more biblically comprehensive view of the classic marks would pair them with complementary biblical accents:

One	↔	Many / Diverse
Holy	↔	Charismatic
Catholic	↔	Particular /Local-Contextual
Apostolic	↔	Prophetic

In Scripture, surely the church is *diverse* and *manifold* as well as one; *charismatic* as well as holy. It is *local* and *contextual* as well as catholic or universal; *prophetic* as well as apostolic. This more rounded accounting of the marks is richer theologically and more accurate historically and sociologically.

If we view these four complementary marks as the missing half of the church’s genetic structure—its double helix, as it were—a more comprehensive ecclesiology emerges, and potentially a wider, more fruitful range of ecclesial models.

²⁰ Snyder, *Community of the King*, rev. ed. (2004).

²¹ Snyder and Runyon, *Decoding the Church*, especially chapters 1-3.

²² Howard A. Snyder, “The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology,” in John G. Stackhouse Jr., ed., *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* (Baker, 2003), 77-103. These four types typically vary somewhat in timeframe: Anglo-Catholic, 60 minutes; Revivalist, 60-75 minutes; Pentecostal-Charismatic, 75-105 minutes; Rock Concert, 90-120 minutes (rough approximations). Each has its distinctive music style, or blend thereof, and corresponding architecture and visual symbols (e.g., altar or communion table, stained glass or not, cross and pulpit, open Bible, banners, digital keyboard, electrical guitars and drum set, video screen).

The book *Decoding the Church* shows the biblical grounding for the church as *manifold, charismatic, prophetic, and local*. These four additional marks are not polar opposites of the traditional ones; they are merely biblical accents that tend to get slighted in the traditional formula.

This broader way of viewing the marks better suits a robust Trinitarianism. Theologians have noted that the traditional marks are weighted toward, or at least correspond to and reinforce, an emphasis on the oneness and otherness of God.²³ By contrast, the proposed complementary set of marks accords with the tri-unity, distinction, and mutuality of the Trinity. The more comprehensive double helix formed by pairing the traditional marks with these other biblical accents yields a more perichoretic ecclesiology.

Though with exceptions, renewal and revitalization movements tend more toward the *diverse, charismatic, prophetic, and contextual* side of this pairing. More established churches, or church movements as they grow increasingly acculturated, tend to emphasize *unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity*—and these now become more the marks of the church as institution than of the church as community of disciples.²⁴

James Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures*

Models of congregational life and local church structure abound.²⁵ One of the more fruitful ones is elaborated by James F. Hopewell in his book, *Congregation: Stories and Structures*.²⁶ Drawing on the literature of worldviews and narrative structures and on studies of local churches, Hopewell uses four categories to elucidate church life and structure: Canonic, Gnostic, Charismatic, and Empiric.

Hopewell positions these as the four sides of a square within which differing congregations (and perhaps church traditions) may be placed. Hopewell's four categories may be summarized as follows:

<i>Type:</i>	CANONIC	GNOSTIC	CHARISMATIC	EMPIRIC
<i>Gospel:</i>	Salvation	Consciousness	Power	Freedom
<i>Church:</i>	Covenant	Pilgrimage	Harvest	Fellowship
<i>Eucharist:</i>	Memorial	Sacrament	Presence	Agape
<i>Motif:</i>	Sacrifice	Integration	Adventure	Testing
<i>Valued Behavior:</i>	Obedience	Inner awareness	Recognition of God's blessings	Realism

Hopewell includes comments from church members to illustrate these four types.

²³ In particular, Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (T. & T. Clark, 1997), especially chapters 3 and 4; Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Orbis, 1988), 16-23.

²⁴ The argument here is elaborated in Snyder and Runyon, *Decoding the Church*, 17-34, and Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology."

²⁵ A popular one worldwide has been the "biotic" Natural Church Development model of Christian Schwarz. See Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (ChurchSmart Resources, 1996); originally published in German, and now translated into many languages.

²⁶ James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (Fortress, 1987), especially chap. 5.

A drawback of this schema is that the four key terms used are not self-evidently clear. Better ones might be found. The usefulness of the model, however, is that it types different churches not primarily on the basis of doctrine or ecclesiastical tradition but of temperament and worldview.

Emerging Models and Currents

The past decade saw a considerable “emergent” or “emerging church” discussion. Meanwhile other trends and currents were also stirring.

Emerging Church. Rather than giving a summary, I mention three books that offer a good sense of the discussion.²⁷ Much of the emergent conversation is carried out over the Internet, however; there are dozens of sites.²⁸

Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures, by Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger (Baker, 2005). This is an overview, placing the emergent movement in context and identifying eight characteristics of emerging churches: 1) identifying with Jesus, 2) transforming secular space, 3) living as community, 4) welcoming the stranger, 5) serving with generosity, 8) participating as producers, 9) creating as created beings, and 8) leading as a body. This is the authors’ typology, based on surveys, but in fact emerging churches and experiments vary so widely that the typology often fits very loosely, or more as an ideal.

Ray Anderson has published *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (InterVarsity, 2006); foreword by Brian McLaren. This is useful as a theological reflection on the impact of postmodernism on contemporary ecclesiology.

Looking for “antecedents in the first-century church for what we today call the emerging church,” Anderson contrasts the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch. Antioch was the original “emerging church”; it “emerged” from the Jerusalem church, leading in turn “to an emergent theology under the apostle Paul’s ministry and teaching.” Anderson’s chapters signal several emerging-church concerns. For example, “It’s about the right gospel, not just the right polity”; “It’s about kingdom living, not kingdom building”; “the community of the Spirit, not just the gifts of the Spirit”; “mission, not just ministry.” The focus is “the church ahead of us, not only the church behind us.”²⁹

Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional, by Jim Belcher (InterVarsity, 2009). Here an early emerging-church activist expresses second thoughts. Belcher has issues with both emerging and traditional churches, as his title suggests. He wants the gospel, worship, church life, and our engagement with culture to be solidly grounded theologically. The book is written from a Reformed perspective; Belcher is founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California.

New Monasticism. In the United States, an expanding network of younger evangelicals is attempting to reappropriate monastic models and spirituality by forming worshipping-serving communities in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and other cities. The

²⁷ See also Scott McKnight, “My Top 5 Books on the Emerging Movement,” *Christianity Today* 53:10 (October 2009), 64. Scott picks *The New Christians*, by Tony Jones; *The Emerging Church*, by Dan Kimball; *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, by D. A. Carson; and *Why We’re Not Emergent*, by Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, plus the Gibbs and Bolger book.

²⁸ These sites lead to many others: <http://www.theooze.com>, <http://www.emergentvillage.com>, <http://www.emergent-uk.org>, <http://www.brianmclaren.net>, <http://www.vintagechurch.com>.

²⁹ Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (InterVarsity, 2006), 13, 1.

focus is on incarnating the gospel among the urban poor, but with a view also toward broader church renewal.

Three books provide a good overview: Scott A. Bessenecker, *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor* (InterVarsity, 2006); Rutba House, *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Cascade Books, 2005), and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church* (Brazos/Baker, 2008). It is illuminating to examine this development in light of the multidimensional model proposed at the end of this essay.

House Church Models. The large and diverse literature on house churches continues to grow.³⁰ Generalizations about house churches apply in some contexts but may totally miss the mark in others. For example, some house churches are authoritarian, others egalitarian. Some are profoundly missional, others are ingrown and narcissistic. Some are charismatic, others are decidedly anti-charismatic. Some view house churches as the only true church; others see them as supplemental or as renewing agencies for traditional churches (*ecclesiolae in ecclesia*). Like all churches, some may be healthy and others dysfunctional.³¹

For our purposes, four points should be noted: First, house churches are generally “primitivist” in the sense that they see the first-century church as normative for today. Second, house churches have always existed in church history and in many contexts have been the church’s primary form (as in the New Testament church and in much of China today). Third, often renewal movements have initially been embodied in house churches or gatherings. Fourth, functional house churches often experience a deep level of mutual support and shared community (*koinonia*) that is often missing in traditional churches, despite the prominence of *koinonia* in the New Testament.

Multiethnic and Third-Culture Churches. In contrast to a decade or two ago when Church Growth theory emphasized “homogeneous unit” churches, today a mushrooming literature advocates multiethnic and third-culture churches. “Third-culture” here means affirming and celebrating cultural differences, integrating these into the very DNA of the church. Numerous viable examples of such churches can now be found.³²

³⁰ See the brief discussion of microchurches in Snyder and Runyon, *Decoding the Church*, 68-69.

³¹ Some sources: Robert and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home: A New Base for Community and Mission* (Sutherland, NSW, Australia: Albatross Books, 1989); Wolfgang Simson, *Houses that Change the World: The Return of House Churches* (Carlisle, Cumbria, England: OM Publishing, 1999); Roberta Halteman Finger, *Roman House Churches for Today*, 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 2007); Nate Krupp, *God's Simple Plan for His Church—and Your Place In It* (Solid Rock Books, 1993); Christian Smith, *Going to the Root: Nine Proposals for Radical Church Renewal* (Herald Press, 1992); Lois Barrett, *Building the House Church* (Herald Press, 1986); Bernard J. Lee and Michael A. Cowan, *Dangerous Memories: House Churches and Our American Story* (Sheed and Ward, 1986); Del Birkey, *The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church* (Herald Press, 1988); Rad Zdero, *The Global House Church Movement* (Wm. Carey Library, 2004); Rad Zdero, ed., *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader* (Wm. Carey Library, 2007); and numerous books by Gene Edwards and Frank Viola.

³² Manuel Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (InterVarsity, 1996); Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (InterVarsity, 1998); Dave Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church* (Zondervan, 2009) and Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (Jossey-Bass, 2007). See also

Obviously cultural and demographic trends, spurred by globalization, urbanization, and migration, have pushed this emphasis to the fore. Clearly the multiethnic focus on the dynamics of culture, ethnicity, and diversity is important ecclesiology, but has been insufficiently addressed in most ecclesiology. Multicultural churches prompt us to reexamine gospel-and-culture issues in Scripture and in the early church.

Insider Movements and Churchless Christianity. In recent decades, significant numbers of Muslims, and some Hindus and Buddhists, have been turning to Jesus Christ without identifying themselves with existing Christian churches. Generally the reasons for not connecting with existing churches are cultural and social, though sometimes missional: the desire to reach as many as possible of their coreligionists with the gospel without alienating them from their social and religious context.

A good introduction, with review of the initial literature, is “Appropriate Approaches in Muslim Contexts” by John and Anna Travis in the book *Appropriate Christianity*, edited by Charles H. Kraft. The authors write, “in a number of countries today, there are groups of Muslims who have genuinely come to faith in Jesus Christ, yet have remained legally and socio-religiously within the local Muslim community.” Travis and Travis believe that “one way God is moving at this point in salvation history, is by sovereignly drawing Muslims to Himself, revolutionizing them spiritually, yet calling them to remain as salt and light in the religious community of their birth.”³³

In 1998 John Travis developed the C1–C6 spectrum or continuum, distinguishing “six types of Christ-centered communities” according to three factors: language, cultural forms, and religious identity. The C5 position, “Muslim Followers of Jesus,” is approximately equivalent to what have come to be known as “insider movements.”³⁴

David Garrison defines insider movements as “popular movements to Christ that bypass both formal and explicit expressions of the Christian religion.”³⁵ An extensive discussion has quickly emerged over insider movements.³⁶

Part of the insider-movement debate involves the question of “churchless Christianity.” Herbert Hoefler’s 2001 book of that title focuses on Hindu followers of Jesus, reporting “research among non-baptized believers in Christ in rural and urban Tamilnadu, India” supplemented by “practical and theological reflections.”³⁷

Gary V. Nelson, *Borderland Churches: A Congregation’s Introduction to Missional Living* (Chalice Press, 2008).

³³ John Travis and Anna Travis, “Appropriate Approaches in Muslim Contexts,” in Charles H. Kraft, ed., *Appropriate Christianity* (Wm. Carey Library, 2005), 397-414 (quotations from 397).

³⁴ Travis and Travis, “Appropriate Approaches,” 397; see John Travis, “The C1 to C6 Spectrum,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34:407-08. Some however distinguish between insider movements and the C5 category.

³⁵ David Garrison, “Church Planting Movements vs. Insider Movements: Missiological Realities vs. Mythological [sic] Speculations,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21:4 (Winter 2004), 151-54.

³⁶ E.g., John and Anna Travis, “Contextualization among Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists: A Focus on Insider Movements,” *Mission Frontiers* (Sept.-Oct. 2005), 12-15 (based on their longer essay cited above); “An Extended Conversation about ‘Insider Movements,’” with contributions by John Piper, Gary Corwin, John and Anna Travis, and others, *Mission Frontiers* (Jan.-Feb. 2006), 16-23; Rebecca Lewis, “Promoting Movements to Christ within Natural Communities,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 24:2 (Summer 2007), 75-76.

³⁷ Herbert E. Hoefler, *Churchless Christianity* (Wm. Carey Library, 2001).

This is not the place to assess the issues such movements raise. The point is that these movements exist; they pose challenges for traditional ecclesiology; they involve questions about revitalization movements; and they raise the question to what degree insider movements have parallels down through church and mission history. More basically, they raise the question of the meaning of *church*. Are two or three people gathered in Jesus name (Mt. 18:20), with no church building and no connection with broader church structures or networks, really churchless?

II. Models of the Church in Mission

Since the beginning of “missional church” discussions in the 1990s, and even earlier, various authors have proposed models of the church in mission. Of course all ecclesiology embodies some sense of mission, at least implicitly.

The writings of Lesslie Newbigin provided the principal inspiration for much of the missional church discussions, especially in England and North America. However other currents feed into the discussions as well.

Five relatively recent books that strongly emphasize the missionary nature of the church and that employ one or more distinct models are especially relevant here.³⁸ Ralph Winter’s modality/sodality model also fits into this picture.

Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending Church in North America

This was the seminal volume in a series sponsored by the Gospel in Our Culture Network (<http://www.gocn.org/>).³⁹ Published in 1998 and edited by Darrell Guder, *Missional Church* gives an analysis of North American culture (noting differences between Canada and the U.S.) and attempts to articulate a missional ecclesiology. The book utilizes a number of models and creatively employs centered-set / bounded-set theory (chapter 7) to show how the church can redemptively engage the world while maintaining its own integrity and identity. The volume was written jointly by an interdenominational panel: Lois Barrett, Inagrace Dietterich, Darrell Guder, George Hunsberger, Alan Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder.⁴⁰

Frost and Hirsch, The Shaping of Things to Come

Though arising from a different place than the North American missional church discussions, the books of Australians Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch use missional church language and models and engage the same issues.

Frost and Hirsch are sharply critical of Western society and ecclesial practice. Their book that initially attracted attention was *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (2003). This was followed by Hirsch’s *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* and Frost’s *Exiles: Living*

³⁸ See also Howard A. Snyder, “Recent Studies in Renewal and Revitalization,” *Revitalization* 13:1 (Spring 2006), 1-3, and Snyder, “Six Key Books on Church Renewal,” *Revitalization* 14:1 (Spring 2007), 3; Hugh Halter, *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community* (Jossey-Bass 2008).

³⁹ A good overview of the network, its discussions, the influence of Newbigin, and the relation to the Gospel and Culture programme in England, is provided in Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry* (Eerdmans, 2007), 1-7.

⁴⁰ Darrell L. Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending Church in North America* (Eerdmans, 1998).

Missionally in Post-Christian Culture (both 2006), and their 2009 book, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church*.⁴¹

The Shaping of Things to Come proposes that three “overarching principles” should govern authentic ecclesiology:

1. The missional church is *incarnational*, not attractional, in its ecclesiology.
2. The missional church is *messianic*, not dualistic, in its spirituality.
3. The missional church adopts an *apostolic*, rather than hierarchical, mode of leadership.⁴²

These three “principles” then shape the book’s structure. The authors use a range of models, including bounded set / centered set theory.

The other three books also employ a variety of models. *ReJesus* in particular uses multiple images—visual, imaginative, conceptual, biographical—that evoke Jesus Christ and Jesus-like discipleship. These include visual images showing how Jesus has been pictured in different times and contexts.

ReJesus argues that Christology must determine missiology, which in turn determines ecclesiology, which then “recalibrates back” to Christology. “Christology is the singularly most important factor in shaping our mission in the world and the forms of *ecclesia* and ministry that result from that engagement.” The book makes little reference to the Holy Spirit or the Trinity; the authors think most Trinitarian theology is excessively complex, “overly ontological in perspective, and missionally clumsy.” They wish to “reinststate a more primitive form of trinitarian understanding . . . much closer to [that] of the New Testament.”⁴³

Frost and Hirsch’s books, though part of the larger missional church discussion, represent a more culturally and ecclesiological critical stance than does the literature arising from the Gospel in Our Culture Network.

Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*

God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church, by Charles Van Engen, is written primarily from a Church Growth perspective. Van Engen develops a missional model of the (local) church that draws upon the four classic marks: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. Speaking of these “four attributes in action,” Van Engen reinterprets the marks (or distinctives, as he calls them) in terms of the missionary nature and calling of the local church: unifying, sanctifying, reconciling, and proclaiming.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Hendrickson, 2003); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Brazos/Baker, 2006); Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Hendrickson, 2006); Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Hendrickson, 2009).

⁴² Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, 12.

⁴³ Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 43, 136. Newbigin early on made the important point that the doctrine of the Trinity first developed in a missional context and with missional concerns. See the discussion in Michael W. Goheen, “*As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You*”: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin’s *Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2000), 120.

⁴⁴ Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People* (Baker, 1991), especially 59-84. Van Engen uses other models, as well.

Taking the four classic marks as givens, Van Engen reinterprets them in missional terms. He does not engage the Radical Protestant tradition or its ecclesiology.

John Driver, *Images of the Church in Mission*

A contrasting study is John Driver's *Images of the Church in Mission*, which reflects Radical Protestant perspectives. Driver is a Mennonite with missionary experience in Latin America.⁴⁵

This book is mainly a biblical study with contemporary application, though Driver engages church history in his first chapter, "Images of the Church in Christendom." Driver discusses twelve biblical images arranged in four categories, as follows:

Pilgrimage Images: The Way, Sojourners, The Poor

New-Order Images: The Kingdom of God, New Creation, New Humanity

Peoplehood Images: People of God, Family of God, Shepherd and Flock

Images of Transformation: Salt, Light, City; Spiritual House; Witnessing Community.

Driver says these biblical images lost much of their force after Constantine. For example, the pilgrimage image "no longer spoke to the church in its mission, since it had become established in the Empire." Similarly with new-order images: "The NT vision of a new creation and a new humanity was relegated to the world-to-come beyond the scope of history."⁴⁶

In his final chapter Driver speaks of the church as "a community of transformation," synthesizing the various biblical images. Taken together these images provide "clues which point toward an ecclesiology more congenial to God's essential missionary intention for his people."⁴⁷

Driver's book shows clearly that in Scripture, church and mission are essentially one. It is useful to compare his images to Dulles' models and other attempts to define or understand the church's essence and mission.

Leffel, *Faith Seeking Action: Mission, Social Movements, and the Church in Motion*

This book articulates a "missio-ecclesiology" drawing upon theology and contemporary social movement theory. Leffel conducted participant-observer case studies of three contrasting movements: The antiglobalization movement, the sanctuary movement in the U.S., and Xenos Christian Fellowship house-church movement in Ohio.

Leffel uses social movement theory as an interpretive framework for understanding the church in mission (or the church in motion, as he prefers). He identifies six key social-movement variables that are applicable to the church: (1) opportunity structure, (2) rhetorical framing, (3) protest strategy, (4) mobilizing structures, (5) movement culture, and (6) participant biography.⁴⁸

Integrating *missio Dei* theology with social movement theory, Leffel sees the church as essentially God's redemptive movement in the world for the sake of his kingdom.

⁴⁵ John Driver, *Images of the Church in Mission* (Herald Press, 1997).

⁴⁶ Driver, *Images*, 227.

⁴⁷ Driver, *Images*, 210.

⁴⁸ Gregory P. Leffel, *Faith Seeking Action: Mission, Social Movements, and the Church in Motion*, *Revitalization: Explorations in World Christian Movements – Intercultural Studies*, No. 1 (Scarecrow, 2007), 55-62.

“Participation in *missio Dei* unfolds in a world-filling movement of faithful action. Faithfulness to God is to take one’s place in [that movement, which means] participating with God in God’s self-giving action to liberate the world from its brokenness, corruption, and death.”⁴⁹

This book is unique in its combining of ecclesiology with recent (post-1960s) social movement theory. It adds a dose of socio-anthropological realism to ecclesiology as well as offering theoretical and strategic insights for the church in mission.

Sodality/Modality Typology

In 1974 Presbyterian missiologist Ralph Winter published an essay entitled “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission” that has since been widely used in evangelical missiology.⁵⁰ Winter argued that wherever the church has been effective in mission it has utilized both *modality* and *sodality* structures. The sodality in Winter’s definition is a distinct subcommunity within the larger church (the modality), and is highly mission-oriented. Medieval preaching orders and modern Protestant missionary societies are examples of such sodalities.

Winter saw the local church as the first of these two normative structures (modality), its key characteristic being that it includes whole families. Such a community must therefore concern itself with the full range of human concerns. It cannot focus effectively on just one concern, at least not for long. This is why sodalities—more narrowly focused missionary structures—are needed. “A sodality is a structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership, and is limited by either age or sex or marital status,” Winter argued.⁵¹

I include this typology here because it is often referenced in the missiological literature. It structurally ties church and mission together and has resonances with other constructs, such as *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* and Zinzendorf’s ecclesiology.

III. Models of Mission

In recent decades a number of missiologists have used comparative models or paradigms of mission. I mention two primary missiological works that employ a range of models, then add some comments about other schemas that can be seen as implying models of mission.

David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*

Since its publication in 1991, David Bosch’s *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* has become a standard work in missiology. The book articulates New Testament models of mission in its first section, then traces “historical paradigms of mission,” utilizing Thomas Kuhn’s paradigm theory and Hans Küng’s model of six major paradigms in Christian history.

⁴⁹ Leffel, *Faith Seeking Action*, 243.

⁵⁰ Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission” in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3rd ed. (Wm. Carey Library, 1999), 220-30 (originally published in *Missiology* 2:1 [Jan. 1974], 121-39; Winter first suggested the idea in “Churches Need Missions Because Modalities Need Sodalities,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* [Summer 1971], 193-220).

⁵¹ Winter’s typology is summarized in Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 52-54, and Snyder, *Community of the King*, 172-76.

In Part 3 of the book Bosch, after noting the emergence of postmodernism, proposes thirteen “elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm”: (1) Mission as the Church-With-Others, (2) as *missio Dei*, (3) as mediating salvation, (4) as the quest for justice, (5) as evangelism, (6) as contextualization, (7) as liberation, (8) as inculturation, (9) as common witness, (10), as ministry by the whole people of God, (11) as witness to people of other living faiths, (12) as theology, and (13) as action in hope. These categories trace the course of missiological thinking throughout the twentieth century.⁵²

Bosch’s historical-theological analysis using a variety of models has proved helpful in understanding the challenges of mission today. It does have some gaps. In particular, it fails to deal adequately with evangelical missiology.

Partly for this reason the book *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, edited by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, is an important complement to Bosch’s book.⁵³ The volume contains essays by the editors and others, including Graham Cray, Peter Kuzmic, and Rene Padilla. It republishes a number of articles and documents from *Transformation* magazine. The theme of the kingdom of God is prominent throughout the book. Charismatic and Pentecostal voices are represented; the chapter by Douglas Peterson, “Pentecostals: Who Are They?” challenges stereotypes of Pentecostals as not socially engaged.

As the title of the book indicates, *transformation* is the dominant mission model here, and there is considerable emphasis on God’s reign. Rene Padilla contributes a chapter on “The Politics of the Kingdom of God and the Political Mission of the Church.”

Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology for Mission Today*

A principal strength of *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, by Roman Catholic missiologists Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder (both members of the Society of the Divine Word), is its ecumenical scope and the way it integrates much missiological work of the past century. The missiology espoused here “has its theological roots in the missionary rebirth at the end of the twentieth century and is in community with those roots.” The book argues that

the various *constants* of the church’s one mission throughout its history have both shaped and been shaped by the historical-cultural *context* and the corresponding theological thought of particular times and places. The history of mission, the movements of culture and the history of theology intersect, and, depending on the way they intersect, various “models” of mission can be discerned.⁵⁴

The authors outline six *constants* in mission: (1) Christology, (2) ecclesiology, (3) eschatology, (4) salvation, (5) anthropology, and (6) culture. These are “doctrinal themes to which the church must be faithful at every boundary crossing and in every context.” Using a sort of grid, the authors then cross-reference these constants to the various *contexts* in which the church has found itself engaged historically and which confront the

⁵² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis, 1991). See Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Univ. of Cambridge Press, 1994, 1996); M. Pocock, G. Van Rhee, and D. McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Baker, 2005).

⁵³ Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Regnum Books International, 1999).

⁵⁴ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Orbis, 2004), 397, 73 (emphasis in the original).

church today. Based on a study of the book of Acts, Bevans and Schroeder argue that “the church only emerges *as* the church when it becomes aware of its boundary-breaking mission not just to Judaism but to all peoples.” Thus “the church becomes missionary by attending to each and every *context* in which it finds itself.”⁵⁵

The authors cross-reference these constants to three types of mission theology: (A) Mission as saving souls and extending the church, (B) Mission as discovery of the truth, and (C) Mission as commitment to liberation and transformation. Thus there are, for example, three “types” of ecclesiology, of eschatology, of views of culture, and so forth.⁵⁶

Two initial chapters cover “biblical and theological foundations” for mission. The largest section is Part II, “Constants in Context: Historical Models of Mission.” Here a number of comparative charts are used.

The book helpfully integrates insights from Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Conciliar Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, and Pentecostal/Charismatic “streams of Christianity” within a framework of historic orthodoxy. With its breadth of focus and richness of models, this is perhaps the most comprehensive book in missiology to be published to date.

Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*

Old Testament scholar and missiologist Christopher J. H. Wright in 2006 published a major study, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*. The book is a biblical exposition with contemporary application.

Wright views the Exodus as “God’s model of redemption” and the Jubilee as “God’s model of restoration.” The church is primarily God’s missional people. Reflecting his groundedness in the Old Testament, Wright takes seriously the place of creation in God’s redemptive plan. He has an extended discussion of “Mission and God’s Earth” (chapter 12), a key biblical theme often missing from models of church and mission.

This is arguably the most comprehensive biblical study to date of the mission of God. It could serve as an important resource in assessing the biblical soundness of many current and historical models of church and mission.

Other Relevant Literature

The preparatory volume for the Edinburgh 2010 centenary missions conference, *Witnessing to Christ Today*, touches on models of mission at several points. The book contains the reports of the study groups formed prior to the conference. The report for Theme 1, Foundations for Mission, concludes with a brief discussion of three models of mission: Mission as *liberation*, mission as *dialogue*, and mission as *reconciliation*. The report notes, “Recent shifts in missiology, and attention to experience as a foundation for mission, have led to scrutiny of models assumed by missiologists and practitioners.”⁵⁷

A few other sources may be cited for their direct or indirect relevance to a discussion of models of mission.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Bevans and Schroeder, 2 (emphasis in the original).

⁵⁶ Bevans and Schroeder, 35-72.

⁵⁷ Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Regnum Books International, 2010), 27-29.

⁵⁸ I make no attempt here to survey the many books on mission theology and theory.

Christ and Culture. H. Richard Niebuhr's widely discussed *Christ and Culture* implicitly suggested quite different models of the church. Niebuhr used the typology of Christ *against* culture, the Christ *of* culture, Christ *above* culture, Christ and culture *in paradox*, and Christ the *transformer* of culture.⁵⁹ These can be correlated with various models of mission.

Though Niebuhr's analysis has proved fruitful both in methodology and in highlighting important issues of culture, it has been roundly criticized, especially by Anabaptists such as John Howard Yoder. Craig Carter argues that the "fundamental problem . . . is that Christendom functions as the unarticulated presupposition of Niebuhr's work."⁶⁰

In *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Critique*, Carter reworks Niebuhr's models. He proposes four basic ones: Christ *legitimizing* culture, Christ *separating from* culture, Christ *humanizing* culture, and Christ *transforming* culture. Since some humanizing and transforming models accept violent coercion (Christendom type) and others reject it (Non-Christendom type), the four models actually transmute into six:

Christendom Types: (1) legitimizing, (2) humanizing, (3) transforming culture.

Non-Christendom Types: (4) transforming, (5) humanizing, (6) separating from culture.

For each type Carter gives examples, examines the biblical basis and Jesus' teachings, and asks about Christology and the way Christ is imaged in the model.⁶¹ Carter doesn't correlate these types directly to models of the church, but throughout the book he does discuss the church as community, as counterculture, as witness, as arm of the state, as body of Christ, and as people of God. In his concluding chapter he speaks of "two kinds of church." One is "the institution that serves the religious needs of society," with "little emphasis on evangelism and outreach" (Christendom model); the other is "a counterculture in tension with the rest of society." This second type of church will be "missional" because its priority is "to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ" by "living out of a different narrative than the world does."⁶²

Models of the Kingdom. My own book *Models of the Kingdom* employs a methodology similar to Avery Dulles'. The book outlines eight models, giving for each its biblical basis, historical examples, and strengths and weaknesses:

- The Kingdom as Future Hope
- The Kingdom as Inner Spiritual Experience
- The Kingdom as Mystical Communion
- The Kingdom as Institutional Church
- The Kingdom as Countersystem
- The Kingdom as Political State
- The Kingdom as Christianized Culture
- The Kingdom as Earthly Utopia

⁵⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (Harper and Row, 1951).

⁶⁰ Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Brazos/Baker, 2006), 53.

⁶¹ Carter, *Rethinking*, 111-96.

⁶² Carter, *Rethinking*, 209-10. Thus he speaks also of two kinds of eschatology, two kinds of discipleship, etc.

The book notes the implications of each model for church and mission. It shows how every conception of the kingdom has to deal with six tension points in Scripture: (1) present–future, (2) individual–social, (3) spirit–matter, (4) gradual–climactic, (5) divine action – human action, and (6) the church as equivalent to or distinct from the kingdom. The book also discusses kingdom models in relation to dispensationalism.⁶³

Models of Community Transformation. There are many models of Christian community development or of ways for the church redemptively to engage its immediate context. Particularly insightful here is the book by Bob Moffitt with Karla Tesch, *If Jesus Were Mayor: How Your Local Church Can Transform Your Community*.⁶⁴ Moffitt is founder of the evangelical ministry Harvest International.

This book aims to help churches focus redemptively on their immediate communities rather than just on themselves. It presents practical models that have been used effectively in a wide variety of cultural contexts. Fairly well grounded biblically and historically, the book is holistic in emphasis and global in scope, and offers many stories and examples.

IV. Models of Church Renewal

Much has been written about revival, church renewal, and Christian revitalization movements. This is not the place to survey that literature, nor to deal with various social-science theories of revitalization. However it may be useful to summarize two conceptual frameworks that I find useful in attempting to understand the different ways renewal and revitalization occur and/or may be studied.

Seven Interpretive Frameworks

Chapter two of *Signs of the Spirit* outlines seven different approaches to church renewal and the study of renewal movements. Several of these frameworks have a substantial literature associated with them. The frameworks employ or imply differing models of renewal. Neither the frameworks themselves nor their implicit models of renewal are necessarily mutually exclusive.

These frameworks are mainly historical and socio-theological. I exclude dispensational and millennial theories, which tend to represent ahistorical impositions.⁶⁵ For simplicity I summarize the seven frameworks in the chart below; in the book they are discussed in more detail, with strengths and limitations noted. The persons cited in column three are also discussed in the book.

⁶³ Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*. In *A Kingdom Manifesto* I show how seven OT themes and their NT resonances jointly illuminate the biblical concept of the kingdom of God, providing a multidimensional kingdom theology: (1) the peaceable order (*shalom*), (2) the promised land, (3) house of God, (4) city of the King, (5) justice for the poor, (6) Sabbath, and (7) Jubilee. Howard A. Snyder, *A Kingdom Manifesto* (InterVarsity, 1985), republished as *Kingdom, Church, and World: Biblical Themes for Today* (Wipf & Stock, 2002).

⁶⁴ Bob Moffitt with Karla Tesch, *If Jesus Were Mayor: How Your Local Church Can Transform Your Community* (Oxford, England: Monarch Books, 2006).

⁶⁵ Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 35-63.

The Study of Church Revitalization: Some Socio-Theological Models			
<i>Framework</i>	<i>Root Idea</i>	<i>Perspective</i>	<i>Features</i>
1. Ecclesiola in Ecclesia	The larger <i>ecclesia</i> needs smaller, more explicitly-committed subcommunities (<i>ecclesiolae</i>)	Theological-historical (Luther, Spener, Zinzendorf)	Recognizes inclusive church / covenant community tension. Subcommunities are normative. Accepts legitimacy of <i>ecclesia</i> ; seeks reform through <i>koinonia</i> .
2. Sect / Church Typologies	All church groups tend either toward highly-committed, exclusivist sects or inclusive, more institutional/established church more or less coterminous with society.	Historical-sociological (M. Weber, Troeltsch, H. R. Niebuhr)	Sees inclusive church and covenant community as mutually exclusive or part of continuum.
3. Believers' Church Theories	The committed community of adult believers is normative form of church. Church is missionary minority based on Spirit & Word, committed to Jesus, patterned after NT church. Renewal = return to NT model.	Biblical-historical-theological (Littell, Durnbaugh, Yoder)	Highly values authentic visible expression of church; radical critique of institutional church; emphasis on obedience, discipleship, servanthood.
4. Revivalism Theories	Under God's sovereignty but with more or less human agency church is periodically renewed by outbreaks of revival.	Biblical-historical-theological (J. Edwards, Finney, Orr, Lovelace)	Sees revival as either normative or necessary; restoration to the NT norm and power; revival produces social betterment; emphasis on God's sovereignty, conviction of sin.
5. Revitalization Movements	Various factors produce a sense of cultural dislocation; in response a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of society to construct a more satisfying culture" emerges. A new "vision" & discernible stages ("Paradigm shift").	Anthropological-historical (A. Wallace, Charles Kraft, McLoughlin, T. Kuhn)	Includes all revitalization movements, not just religious. Stages: steady state, increased stress, cultural distortion, revitalization, new steady state. Movement involves 1) mazeway reformulation, 2) communication, 3) organization, 4) cultural transformation, 5) routinization.
6. Modality/Sodality Typology	May be seen as systematization of #1. Church needs normatively both inclusive congregation (modality) & mission-oriented order or society (sodality).	Historical-theoretical (Winter, Mellis-Wesley?)	Both structures normative, complementary. Oriented toward concern for mission; also a possible renewal strategy. Discernible in history.
7. Catholic / Anabaptist Typology	Renewal movements within "catholic" church tend toward "anabaptist" or believers' church model. May be seen as variant of #3 or synthesis of #1, 3, 4.	Historical/theoretical (R. Ruether, M. Novak - Wesley?)	Recognizes "catholic" church / gathered church polarity; parallel between Catholic orders & believers' churches.

Church Renewal as Multidimensional

How does renewal or revitalization actually come to a local church, denomination, or group of churches? My own historical and theological analysis suggests that God's Spirit renews the church in five ways, which may be called five dimensions of renewal:

Personal Renewal (Individual)
 Corporate Renewal (Community)
 Conceptual Renewal (Theological)
 Structural Renewal (Institutional)
 Missional Renewal (Mission)

These are not sequential steps. It appears rather that the renewal process works like this:

1. Renewal may begin at any point, then spread to other dimensions.
2. Renewal must become *personal* and *corporate* to be genuine in terms of the character and mission of the church, since the church is based on personal-social relationships.
3. Renewal must become *conceptual* and *structural* to be long-lasting. Many renewals prove abortive for lack of appropriate structures and conceptual-theological understandings.
4. Renewal must reach the *missional* level to be biblically dynamic. For the church to be faithful to its calling, renewal must turn the church outward toward the renewal of society and all creation—the comprehensive vision of the kingdom of God.⁶⁶

Other authors have also proposed multidimensional models of renewal. In *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* Richard Lovelace suggests a “unified field theory” of spirituality and church renewal in which the church’s differing traditions each contribute to the mystery of church and kingdom.⁶⁷ Richard Foster argues that the various traditions in church history can be viewed as “streams of living water” that, tested by Scripture, help renew and nourish the church. Foster identifies six such streams: (1) contemplative, (2) holiness, (3) charismatic, (4) social justice, (5) evangelical, and (6) incarnational/sacramental. Each of these is associated with particular movements within church history.⁶⁸

Summary

These various models of church, mission, the church in mission, and of church renewal show the many ways the life of the church in history can be analyzed. They make up a toolbox from which we may select one or another, according to need.

Christians believe that before and after all analysis, the church of Jesus Christ remains a mystery. We don’t understand precisely how the Spirit works to renew the church. Sometimes the picture appears clearer looking back after the fact than it does at the time. There is always the danger of over-analyzing or of thinking we know more than we do. Yet multiple models are useful tools in grasping a measure of the mystery.

The above discussion leads finally to a multidimensional model that I propose as a way of studying church renewal and revitalization movements in a historical and ecumenical context. This model attempts to combine and synthesize characteristics or

⁶⁶ See Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 285-94. See also Snyder, “Strategic Planning and the Kingdom of God,” *Revitalization* 14:2 (Fall 2007), 2, and the model presented there.

⁶⁷ Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (InterVarsity, 1979), 12, 17.

⁶⁸ Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

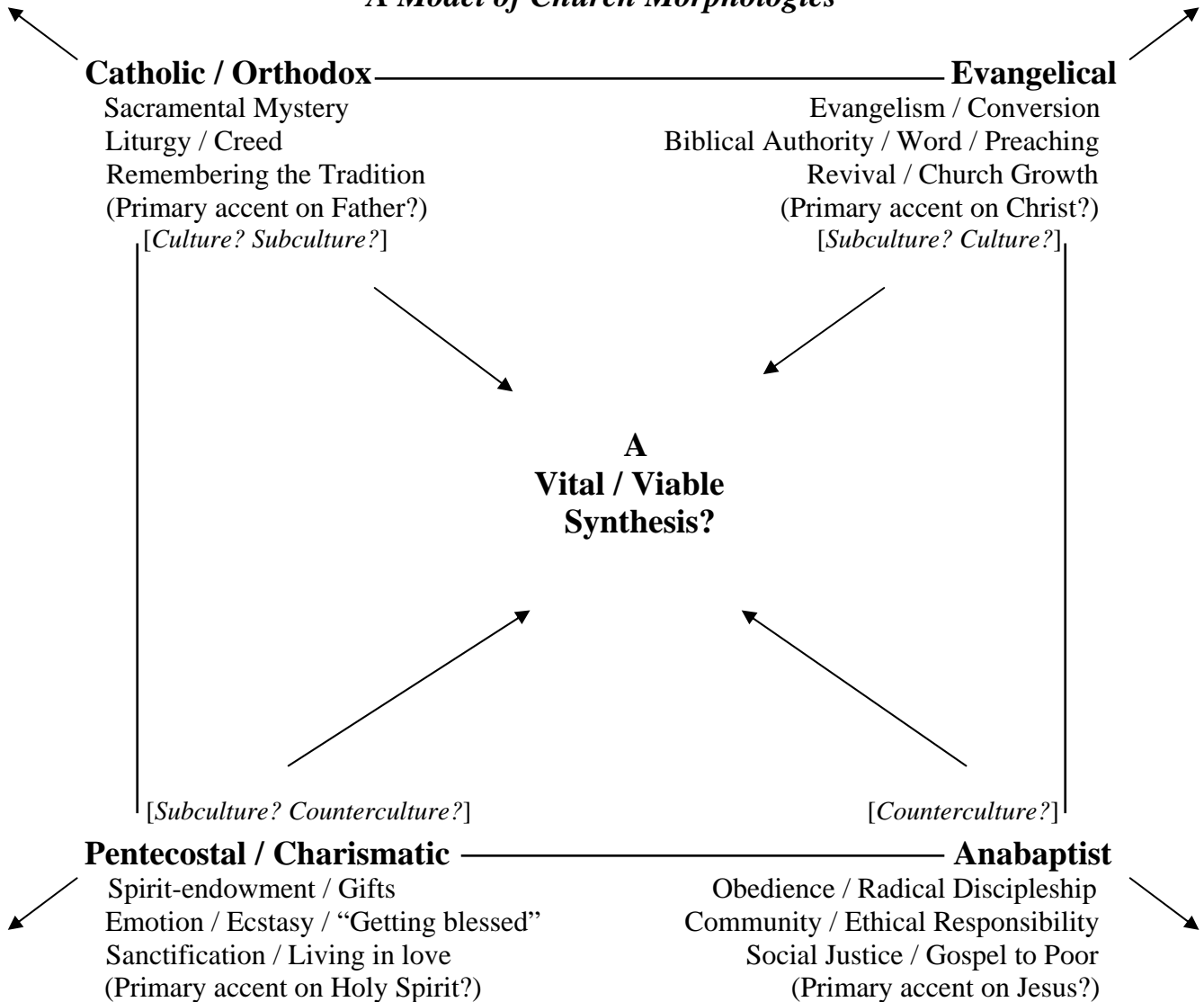
“marks” from several of the church’s great traditions: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant Evangelical, Anabaptist, and Pentecostal-Charismatic.

V. A Multidimensional Synthesis

Though most churches stand in one or another of the great traditions or streams of Christianity, most are also in some sense a hybrid, with various contextual and cultural elements also mixed in. This is increasingly true today due to globalization, immigration, urbanization, and Internet-enabled communication.

Most churches can however be mapped on a grid that draws upon and combines major or dominant ecclesial traditions. Here is the model I propose:

A Model of Church Morphologies



Each of these four traditions has its own way of understanding worship, sacrament, evangelism, community, discipleship, and mission.⁶⁹ Each views the church’s role in

⁶⁹ Compare Newbigin’s early tripartite model in *The Household of God*, based on three of these four (Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal), as noted earlier.

culture differently. The dynamics can vary also in different cultural contexts. For example, liturgical sacramental worship was once “culture” in most of Europe, but in many churches has become “counterculture.” (Significantly, a focus on the gospel for the poor has almost always been countercultural.)

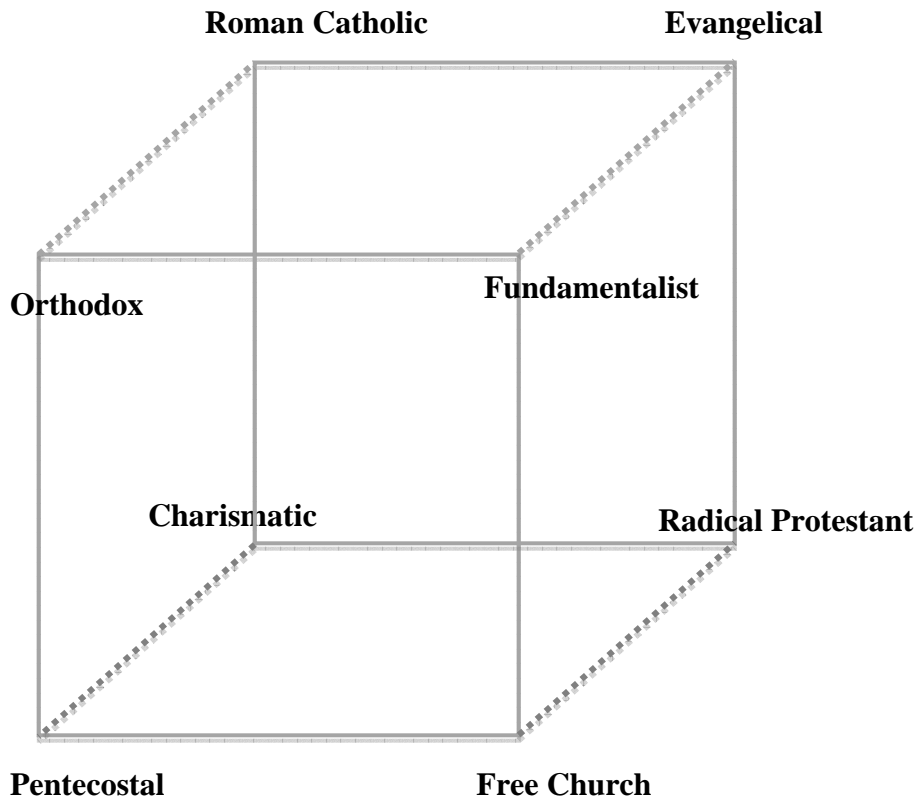
Though there are substantial differences between the Roman Catholic and the various Orthodox traditions, they are quite similar with regard to the characteristics highlighted here.

The arrows suggest the dynamic nature of the interplay of the traditions. Over time, churches (local or otherwise) and persons may move in varied directions. Churches may evolve more toward a synthesis of two or more of these traditions, developing a hybrid or multidimensional ecclesiology. Or they move to the extremes of one particular tradition (as suggested by the external arrows)—in the process losing key elements of the whole gospel. By contrast, renewal movements often seek to recover, and may in turn overemphasize, elements that had been neglected or lost in their originating context.

Such transitions, or expansions of emphasis, can be true of local churches or denominations. They can be true also of particular persons, which partly explains why some people may leave one church or tradition and migrate to another.

The four main dimensions of this model could easily be multiplied, for example by separating Orthodox and Roman Catholic, or perhaps Pentecostal and Charismatic (see below). Though this might be more accurate, it makes the model so complex as to be less useful.

Amplifying the Four Dimensions



These multidimensional models underscore the mystery and complexity—the ecology—of the church. Pondering a wealth of models can help us appreciate the complexity and perhaps help churches more fully embody the healing, transforming power of the good news of Jesus Christ.

[Revised 5/27/10]