

The 'After Christendom' Series

The Anabaptist Mennonite Network is working in partnership with several publishers to produce a major series of books on the meaning and significance of the end of Christendom in western culture.

Many Christians have focused on the challenges and opportunities of the perceived shift from modernity to post-modernity in recent years, but fewer have appreciated the seismic shifts that have taken place with the disintegration of a nominally Christian society. Although the term 'post-Christendom' is used more often now, it is generally not used with great precision and is frequently confused with postmodernity.

Christendom

'Christendom' was a historical era, a geographical region, a political arrangement, a sacral culture and an ideology. For many centuries Europeans have lived in societies that were nominally Christian. Church and state have been the pillars of a remarkable civilization that can be traced back to the decision of the emperor Constantine I early in the fourth century to replace paganism with Christianity as the imperial religion.

Christendom, a brilliant but brutal culture, flourished in the Middle Ages, fragmented in the reformation of the sixteenth century, but persisted despite the onslaught of modernity. It exported its values and practices to many other parts of the world through both mission and conquest, but it has been slowly declining during the past three centuries. In the twenty-first century Christendom is unravelling.

Post-Christendom

What will emerge from the demise of Christendom is not yet clear, but we can now describe much of western culture as 'post-Christendom'.

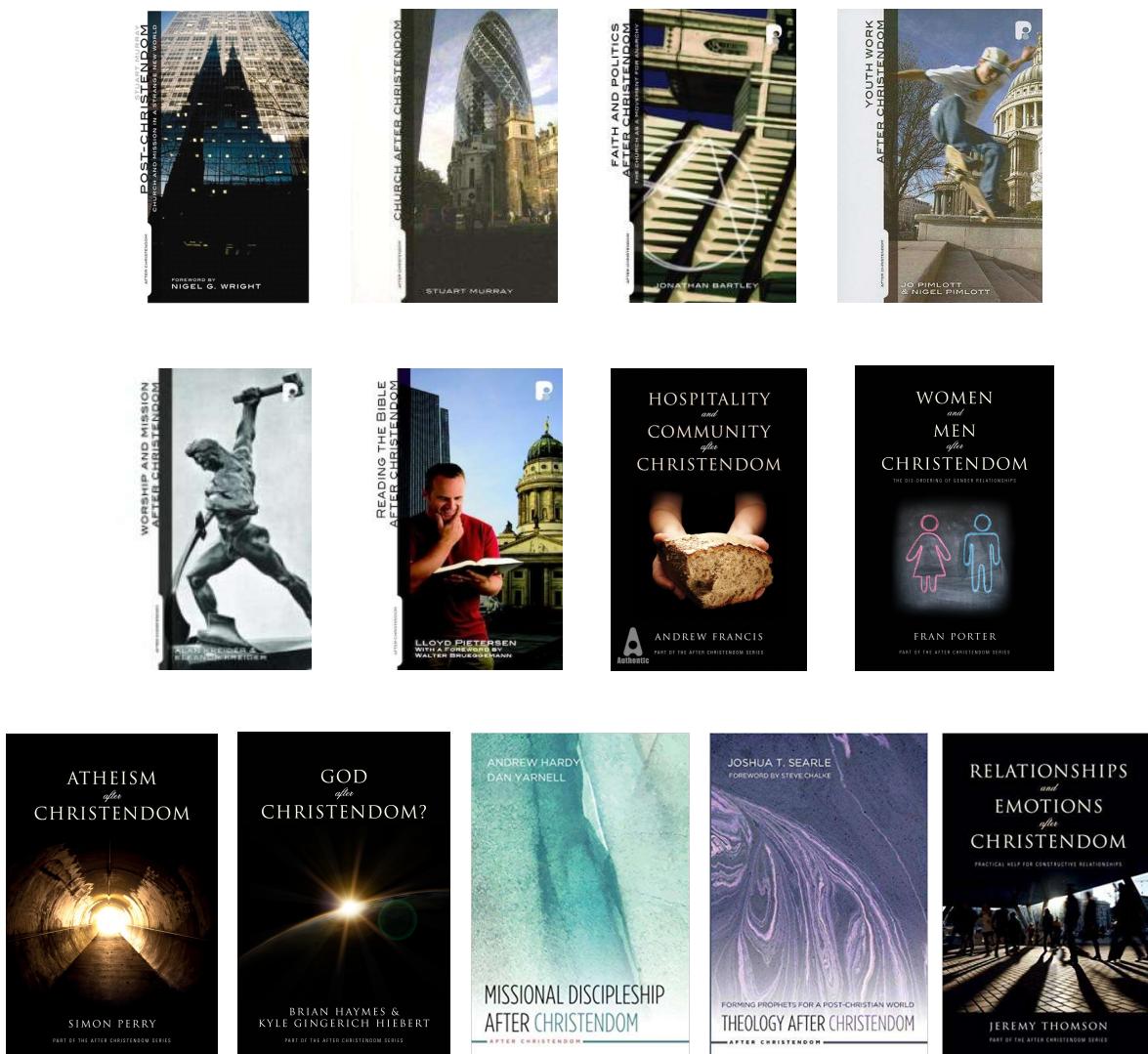
Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.

This definition, proposed and unpacked in **Post-Christendom**, the first book in the 'After Christendom' series, has gained widespread acceptance.

The Series

The 'After Christendom' series explores the implications of the demise of Christendom and the challenges facing a church now living on the margins of western society. The various authors all write from within the Anabaptist tradition and draw on this long-marginalised movement for inspiration and insights. They see the current challenges facing the church not as the loss of a golden age but as opportunities to recover a more biblical and more Christian way of being God's people in God's world. The series addresses a range of issues, including social and political engagement, how we read Scripture, youth work, mission, worship, and the shape and ethos of the church after Christendom.

Books already published since 2004:



These books have been published by Paternoster or Wipf & Stock; some have also been released by Herald Press. A revised edition of *Post-Christendom* was published by SCM Press. The books are not intended to be the last word on the subjects they address, but an invitation to discussion and further exploration. Several more books are being written and will be published in the coming years. These include:

Security after Christendom (John Heathershaw)

Interpreting the Old Testament after Christendom (Jeremy Thomson)

Singleness and Marriage after Christendom (Lina Toth Androviene)

Sacraments after Christendom (Andrew Francis and Janet Sutton-Webb)

Summaries

Post-Christendom: church and mission in a strange new world by Stuart Murray (2004; revised edition 2018)

The first volume in the series investigated the coming of Christendom in the fourth century, identified the main components of the 'Christendom shift' and traced the development and subsequent decline of Christendom over the following centuries. After explaining why Christendom as a political entity disintegrated during the twentieth century, the book examines the Christendom legacy, which consists of vestiges in church and society and a mindset that may persist long after Christendom itself is defunct. Three final chapters suggest ways in which church and mission may be reconfigured in light of the end of Christendom. Post-Christendom raises numerous issues that will be further explored in the books that follow.

Church after Christendom by Stuart Murray (2005)

The second book explores various questions. How will the Western church negotiate the demise of Christendom? Can it rediscover its primary calling, recover its authentic ethos and regain its nerve? The author surveys the 'emerging church' scene that has disturbed, energised and intrigued many Christians. He listens carefully to those who have been joining and leaving the 'inherited church'. Interacting with several proposals for the shape the church should take as it charts a new course for its mission in post-Christendom, the author reflects in greater depth on topics introduced in **Post-Christendom** and the practical implications of proposals made in that book. **Church after Christendom** offers a vision of a way of being church that is healthy, sustainable, liberating, peaceful and missional.

Faith and Politics after Christendom: the church as a movement for anarchy by Jonathan Bartley (2006)

For the best part of 1700 years, the institutional church has enjoyed a hand-in-hand relationship with government. Indeed, the church has often been seen as the glue that has stopped political systems from disintegrating into anarchy. But now for the first time in centuries, the relationship has weakened to the point where the church in the UK can no longer claim to play a decisive part in government. *Faith and Politics after Christendom*, published in 2006, offers perspectives and resources for Christians and churches no longer at the centre of society but on the margins. It invites a realistic and hopeful response to challenges and opportunities awaiting the church in twenty-first century politics.

Youth Work after Christendom by Nigel Pimlott & Jo Pimlott (2008)

This book was an unexpected but very welcome addition to the series. The authors had read **Post-Christendom** and had realised that this perspective on mission and culture had many implications for youth work, especially youth work on the margins of society. Youth work, in fact, was another lens through which to investigate the Christendom legacy; just as post-Christendom was a new lens through which to search for appropriate and creative forms of youth work in a changing culture. If youth culture represents the leading edge of cultural and societal change, or at least reflects the pressures and possibilities emerging in our society, this volume may be one of the most important in the 'After Christendom' series. For if we can re-imagine and re-shape youth work for a post-Christendom culture, perhaps other dimensions of ecclesial and missional transformation will follow.

Worship and Mission after Christendom by Alan & Eleanor Kreider (2009)

Alan and Eleanor Kreider were American Mennonites who lived in England for thirty years and were at the heart of the emerging Anabaptist movement here. Their jointly authored book explores the relationship between worship and mission and how this relationship is crucial in post-Christendom. In worship the followers of Jesus are equipped to participate in the mission of God. This book explores the dynamics of the kind of worship that will equip and inspire us to be missional disciples.

Reading the Bible after Christendom by Lloyd Pietersen (2011)

This book is in three parts: in the first section the author provides an historical overview covering biblical interpretation pre-Constantine, the effects of Constantine on reading the bible and the contribution of 16th-century Anabaptists to biblical interpretation. The second section forms the heart of the book in which the author takes the reader book by book through the Bible, pointing out what can be seen when reading from the margin. In the final section two brief contemporary applications of such readings are explored: reading the Bible for spirituality and for mission. The book's thesis is that reading the Bible should be a communal activity and so the author opens ways of reading to enable readers to explore the contents of scripture together.

Hospitality and Community after Christendom by Andrew Francis (2012)

Shared meals can change lives. From the radical Anabaptist tradition, Andrew Francis grew up experiencing hospitality in many contexts. He applies this to Christian congregations: through the use of Communion and prayer breakfasts, house groups which always gathered for meals, self-catering church weekends and outreach events built around food, folk renew their interest in both discipleship and the 'Jesus community'. Biblical narrative interwoven with contemporary examples explore shared food and lives. This book challenges traditional notions of religious community, offering models for today. 'Table liturgies' for congregations and home groups, and a bibliography (with cookery books) are included.

Atheism after Christendom by Simon Perry (2015)

To be atheist is to reject the gods of the age. Throughout Western history, those gods have included: the gods of Greece, whom Socrates opposed and was hence executed on the charge of 'atheism'; Roman Emperors, gods whom Jews and Christians resisted and were hence persecuted as 'atheists'; the pseudo-Christian god of Christendom, against whom Christian groups like Donatists and Waldensians, Lollards and Anabaptists rebelled and were outlawed as 'atheists'. The god of Christendom was eventually pronounced dead by Friedrich Nietzsche. Since then, atheists have continued to rebel against this dated and defunct god. Now that we live in a post-Christendom era, the New Atheists boldly oppose the god of a bygone age whilst dutifully worshipping the gods of our own age. These new gods resemble very closely the old Roman gods, Mars (celebrating the visible, military supremacy of 'us') and Venus (worshipping the economic structures that defend our privilege at the expense of 'them'). **Atheism After Christendom** is a call to both atheist and Christian, to be faithful to their atheistic heritage.



Women and Men after Christendom by Fran Porter (2015)

This book argues for Christian understanding and practice that takes the hierarchy out of gender relationships. It demonstrates how the structures and mindsets of male dominance and female subordination have been and still are perpetuated, and offers alternative understanding rooted in biblical and theological reflection. From the gospel witness and the lives of the first Christians, through the patriarchal gender order of Christendom, to the challenges of equality movements, and the impact of our theological imagination on the social relations between women and men, this book traces how unequal gender power relations are both entangled and defied, inviting Christian communities to explore non-hierarchical ways of relating between women and men.

God after Christendom? by Brian Haymes & Kyle Gingerich Hiebert (2015)

Whatever is happening in history, whatever deals are struck between Church and State, whether Christians are influential or vulnerable in society, marginal or in power, God remains God and that is good news. At least it is so long as God remains God and not some being, even a Supreme Being, made in our image. This book revisits the long tradition of Christian speech about God in the conviction that in Scripture and the story of Christian reflection there are resources to help keep the church in the way of faithful discipleship, even in the face of contemporary temptation to focus on who or what is less than God. Beginning with the Bible, the authors move to explore some classic Christian affirmations and why they remain crucial, to reflect on how we now speak of God, facing issues of evil and suffering and why faith in the true God must always lead to worship and peace.

Relationships and Emotions after Christendom by Jeremy Thomson (2016)

Relationships and emotions are essential to all our lives, and yet loneliness appears to be rising in Westernised societies. Some people find their own feelings hard to recognise, difficult to express or impossible to handle; others are intimidated by emotions strongly expressed by people they live or work with. This book explores the small-scale interactions of our lives and the somewhat larger-scale dealings of our churches and local communities, often marred by low intensity antagonism. It begins with the relationships and emotions of Jesus and explores the interface between theology and psychology to illuminate social interaction and encourage personal reflection. As Christendom unravels, it appeals for followers of Jesus to live out a style of social relationships that is emotionally healthy, that handles conflict constructively, that challenges injustice creatively, and that forgives graciously.



Missional Discipleship after Christendom by Dan Yarnell and Andy Hardy (2018)

It is not a changing culture, reduced resources, or a rescinding Christian memory that creates the greatest challenges for the church in the West. It is the lack of a clear commitment to the intentional, authentic, and contextual expressions of missional disciple-making, which will shape current and future generations of followers of Jesus to express the values of the Kingdom today. This book offers stimulating historical, biblical, and theological reflections on discipleship and considers some of the possibilities and opportunities afforded to us by our post-Christian context. Missional discipleship allows the missio Dei to shape us in our engagement our practices and sustain us in the lifelong journey of becoming and developing disciples that follow Jesus today.

Theology After Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World by Joshua Searle (2018)

Christianity must be understood not as a religion of private salvation, but as a gospel movement of universal compassion, which transforms the world in the power of God's truth. Amid several major global crises, including the rise of terrorism and religious fundamentalism and a sudden resurgence of political extremism, Christians must now face up fearlessly to the challenges of living in a "post-truth" age in which deceitful politicians present their media-spun fabrications as "alternative facts." This book is an attempt to enact a transformative theology for these changing times that will equip the global Christian community to take a stand for the gospel in an age of cultural despair and moral fragmentation. The emerging post-Christendom era calls for a new vision of Christianity that has come of age and connects with the spiritual crisis of our times. In helping to make this vision a reality, Searle insists that theology is not merely an academic discipline, but a transformative enterprise that changes the world. Theology is to be experienced not just behind a desk, in an armchair, or in a church, but also in hospitals, in foodbanks, in workplaces, and on the streets. Theology is to be lived as well as read.