Journal of Contemporary Ministry

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About this Journal

Updated Editorial Board

as at May 2021

Professor Emeritus, The Rev. Gary D. Bouma, AM - Monash University; Former Chair of Harvest Bible College Academic Board; UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations–Asia Pacific, Past-President of the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, and former Chairman of the Christian Research Association.

Rev Dr Peter Carblis - Adjunct lecturer for University of Newcastle; former principal Tabor NSW, Australia.

Rev Prof Mark J. Cartledge- Principal and Professor of Practical Theology, London School of Theology, UK; leading practical theologian and author in this field; Anglican priest.

Rev Dr Angelo Cettolin- Dean of Faculty, Eastern College Australia, Senior Lecturer Melbourne School of Theology and Eastern College, Ordained Minister Australian Christian Churches, co-lead pastor Reach 21 Church, Port Melbourne.

Rev Prof Darren Cronshaw - Head of Research and Professor of Missional Leadership, Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity); Pastor, AuburnLife Baptist Church; and Chaplain, Australian Army.

Dr Trudy Dantis- Director, National Centre for Pastoral Research, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; CRA Board member and Honorary Research Fellow, University of Divinity.

Dr Bob Dixon - Foundation Director of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Research Office, Honorary Professor of Australian Catholic University 2010-2020, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Divinity, Member CRA Board 1992-2018.

Dr Albert Haddad- Associate Dean Higher Education Development, Victorian Institute of Technology

Assoc Professor Dr Graham Joseph Hill – Principal, Director of Research, and Assoc. Professor of Global Christianity at Stirling Theological College (University of Divinity)

Editorial Team

EDITORIAL

Journal of Contemporary Ministry Issue 5 June, 2021

Dear Readers

It's been a few years since the last issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*. There are good reasons for this hiatus but we are back "with a vengeance."

The journal was initially begun under the auspices of Harvest Bible College. However, at the end of 2017, Harvest entered into a merger with Alphacrucis College and everything from Harvest had to be reconsidered. In the end, Alphacrucis had no space for this journal in addition to *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* and the visions of the two journals were too different for a merger to work. For a time, it looked like this journal would cease. But several of us (especially Professor Philip Hughes) resisted such a conclusion. Negotiations began with the Christian Research Association (CRA) and this journal now has a bright new future under the oversight of CRA but still with its own distinctive vision and identity.

This new space for the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* has several advantages. It broadens the potential audience and reach of the journal since CRA is an ecumenical ministry. This also means a greater breadth of scholarship being exposed to view. It frees up contributors from any false fears about denominational loyalties or bias. It also allows us to "dream again" about what such a journal as this can achieve.

Our goal is to stimulate discussion about contemporary Christian ministry in the broadest sense of that term, that is, any current activity of Christians with the goal of helping other Christians or the broader community. Obviously, we are particularly interested in "contemporary" forms of ministry adapted to the current situation in Australia and other places but, as this issue exemplifies, such discussion topics can be highly diverse. However, such a conversation is imperative when new forms of ministry are emerging everywhere, sometimes making great contributions to Christian progress.

Resurrecting a journal after a few years of silence is not an easy task so I want to thank all those who helped make this possible, including the board of CRA and the new editorial team of Professor Philip Hughes, Ashley Manly (journal manager), Stephen Parker (book review editor), and Stephen Reid (CRA). I also want to acknowledge the

help of the previous journal manager, Kerrie Stevens, who contributed the list of recent theses and helped transition to this new arrangement, and the ongoing support of our Editorial Board, which includes a wide range of scholars from all over the world, some of whom have supported this journal from the start (you can read the list of current members on the website). I am continuing, at least for a season, as the editor.

The new look journal still includes “double blind” peer-reviewed articles, research notes, book reviews and a list of recent theses in the field of contemporary ministry. We intended to include a pastoral reflection and an outstanding student essay, but this was unable to be achieved in this issue. If you are a pastor with a good reflection to share about one or more aspects of your ministry experience, please consider submitting it to us. If you are studying at post-graduate level in a field related to contemporary ministry and gained a very high mark in a recent essay, you might like to submit that for potential publication here.

I am excited to commend the contents of this Issue 5 to you.

The five peer-reviewed articles are highly relevant given the state of contemporary ministry around the world, especially (but not only) in Pentecostal and charismatic streams. It’s well known that these are the fastest growing forms of Christianity around the globe and even here in Australia (and much of the western world) Pentecostal churches like the Australian Christian Churches and Hillsong are still growing, though much less dramatically than in the 1980s and 1990s. But sympathetic (and unsympathetic) observers know also that all is not well in these streams. Our first two articles expose two major issues with Pentecostal and charismatic churches which are found well beyond the territory that the articles focus on.

“Why Gen Y are leaving Pentecostal churches” is written by **Dr Mark Bohr**, the Director of The Emerging Church (Australia) and Emerging Ministries (Uganda) and **Professor Philip Hughes**, a Research Fellow with Alphacrucis College and ordained minister of the Uniting church in Australia, who for more than thirty years was the senior research officer with the Christian Research Association. It exposes the problem that, while many people are joining Pentecostal churches, a large number are also leaving them for other churches or even for a post-Christian life. The article explores several kinds of research into the issues especially related to so-called “Gen Y” and draws specifically on Bohr’s Australian research project to analyse why this is

happening. My own experience aligns with what the article concludes and it is sobering reading.

Perhaps the fastest growth in Christianity generally, and Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in particular, is happening in sub-Saharan Africa. Building on the sacrificial service of western missionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African-led Pentecostal/charismatic churches have exploded in size in nearly every African country, partly because of their unique ability to speak into the African worldview and spirituality. One of the major features of this stream has been leadership by charismatic prophets. Often such leadership is very beneficial in terms of helping Africans respond to, and manage, their struggles with poverty, illness and other daily issues. Such prophets have been very skillful at speaking into their people's mindset and encouraging faith, leading to breakthroughs for their benefit. But as Isaac Boaheng points out in his article on **prophetism in Ghana**, there is a dark side to this kind of ministry and discernment is called for by African Christians concerned about true Christian doctrine and Christian growth to maturity. While this issue is perhaps starkest in Africa, it affects contemporary Christian churches all over the world and therefore this article has broad application. The author, **Isaac Boaheng,** is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church Ghana, a part-time Biblical Hebrew and Old Testament lecturer at Christian Service University College, Sunyani Campus, Ghana, and a research fellow at the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa.

The other articles are less specific to one form of contemporary Christianity and more oriented to the individual help ministers and other Christians can offer to believers and the world at large.

In a world marked by increasing exposure of child abuse and violence against women (current investigations in Australia's parliament are getting a lot attention as I write), an underlying question relates to **forgiveness**. When and how (and why) can victims of abuse forgive those who have violated them? Too often in the past, pastors sent women back into abusive situations, under the guise of submission to their husbands, without attempting to bring those husbands to account and challenge them to change. Forgiveness does not equate to reconciliation or condoning cruel and sinful behaviour. But unforgiveness equally eats away at the victim's own internal life. Edwards and Lau's article seeks to find theoretical and practical answers for those trying to help victims find a path to peace. **Dr Tom Edwards** has been a Lecturer at Monash University in the School of Psychological Sciences, a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at

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Eastern College Australia, Director of Research at Eastern College Australia and Senior Counsellor at LifeCare (Crossway Baptist Church). He is also the Chair of the Christian Research Association and operates a small consultancy with a colleague which seeks to use virtue principles to enhance personal, organisational and community success. **Amy Lau**: Is a highly qualified and experienced counsellor practicing at LifeCare (Crossway Baptist Church). Her particular interests are working with children in the context of play therapy, sand-tray work and other projective therapies.

The final two peer-reviewed articles address aspects of Christian leadership and training leaders. One of the common ways of developing leaders is through a process of **mentoring**, either one-to-one or in small groups. The article by Parker and Brailey investigates some specific ways of mentoring young adults and evaluates them with a view to assessing the needed elements of effective mentoring. **Geoff Brailey** is a Social Researcher with McCrindle Research and Youth and Discipleship Pastor at C3 Church Rouse Hill, NSW. **Dr Stephen Parker** is the Academic Coursework Manager at the Australian College of Ministries and the author of *The Heart of an Elder*. He has previously served as State Youth Director for the Churches of Christ in Queensland and as an Associate Minister for Youth and Children at Springwood Church of Christ in Brisbane.

Dr Nathan Polley is a professional educator and consultant in education leadership and management, corporate training and project management with experience across Australia, Aotearoa-New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Egypt and Cambodia. His article investigates a specific leadership development program in Aotearoa New Zealand which incorporates the theology of **servant leadership with specific Maori cultural elements**. This is a distinctive approach which has potential application in other parts of the world, based on the reality that every culture has different ideas about leadership that can intersect with biblical Christian theology fruitfully.

All of these articles reveal the importance of good leadership in Christian churches and other organisations. Perhaps others may like to add to this conversation in future issues of the Journal. The next issue (Issue 7, for reasons given below) is already filling up with new articles but there is room for some more, especially from women, who are unrepresented in this issue (my only regret in commending it to you). A woman's approach to Christian leadership, for example, would be stimulating.

About

Please read the book reviews and the list of theses in this issue. Such a list is almost unique and helps readers see where the field of studies in contemporary ministry is going.

We are also excited to announce that a **special extra issue** of the Journal will be released at the end of 2021 on **Mega Churches and Worship**, flowing from a conference on that theme in 2020. The articles for this are all in process but there is space for a student essay or book reviews.

So happy reading. Be blessed

(Associate Professor) Jon K. Newton

Peer Reviewed Articles

Journal of Contemporary Ministry

Peer Reviewed Articles

Why Gen Y are Leaving Hillsong and Other Pentecostal Churches

Pastor Dr Mark Bohr and Rev Prof Philip Hughes

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Rev. Prof. Hughes - DTheol(South East Asia Graduate School of Theology), MA(University of Melbourne), MEd(University of Melbourne), BD(Hons) (Melbourne College of Divinity), Research Fellow, Alphacrucis College
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Abstract

Australian population censuses have shown the rates of growth in people identifying as Pentecostal have slowed since 2001, following rapid growth between 1976 and 1996. A survey of 343 people followed by interviews of 55 people shed light on the reasons many people have ceased to attend or identify with these churches. The major reason was the rejection of the beliefs and moral values espoused by the churches. Other reasons include bad experiences of churches and religious people, the sense of feeling judged and the lack of opportunity for dialogue within the churches. Many felt there was a lack of tolerance for diversity and they reacted to the exclusive and authoritarian approach taken by many churches. These findings reflect the theory of cultural change in the Western world described by Heelas and Woodhead (2005) in terms of people moving from externally imposed ways of seeing life to people believing it was important for each person to construct life for themselves in a way which authentically expressed their individuality. However, in contrast to Heelas and Woodhead (2005), this research shows it has not simply led to a replacement of religion by spirituality, but to a variety of ways of constructing life.

Introduction

Analysis of data from the Australian population censuses shows that identification with Pentecostal churches grew very strongly between 1976 and 1996 (Hughes, 2012,

p.52). One Pentecostal scholar, Barry Chant, predicted in 1984 that, based on this rate of growth, the Pentecostal churches would have a million attenders by 2001 (Chant, 1984, p.220).

It has been argued by many scholars (Bouma, 2006; Rose et al, 2014; Cox, 1995; Hughes, 1996) that a cultural revolution of the baby boomer generation led to more experiential and emotional forms of religion replacing the rational, hierarchical forms that dominated the mainstream churches. As result of these changes since the 70s and 80s, many people moved into Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches.

Then, according to the censuses, the rate of growth began to slow. Between 2006 and 2016, the growth rate was just above that of the Australian population as a whole and could be accounted for by the young age profile of the Pentecostals and the fact that many had children during that decade (Hughes, 2017, p. 4). There was anecdotal evidence of many young people, particularly members of Gen Y (born between 1982 and 1998), leaving the Pentecostal churches. The research question which this article addresses is what are the factors in some young people turning away from religious institutions and, in some cases, from the Christian faith altogether?

There has been a long debate about the decline of religion in the Western world. With the decline in church attendance in the 1960s the theory of secularisation came back into the conversation (Singleton, 2014, pp.34-47). This theory has had many forms, but fundamentally sees change as occurring over a long period of time: an evolutionary process in human thinking in which religious institutions become less influential and religious ways of thinking are superseded by scientific ways of thinking (Taylor, 2007, p.4). For example, Harvey Cox wrote Secular City explaining secularisation as freeing the world of religious and pseudo-religious ideas and worldviews along with stamping out the supernatural and sacred (Cox, 1965, p.2).

More specifically, studies of religiosity of Gen Y have highlighted a decline of interest in religiosity in some Western countries since the 1970s. In a major study of Gen Y in Australia, Mason et al. (2007, p.227) wrote:

> *Many young people in Australia are following an avowedly secular path in life – rejecting belief in God and declaring that there is little truth in any religion, while at the same time affirming human experience, human reason and scientific explanations. While some*

> *Gen Ys might be angry or disenchanted with organised religion, many simply do not care or are not interested – it has never been on their 'radar'.*

Mason et al list a number of reasons given by Gen Y for no longer believing in God. The major ones were that the explanations about life from science made belief in God impossible, and that there was no convincing evidence or proof of God's existence. The problem of how a good God could allow the suffering of innocent people was cited quite often. Others cited disillusionment with the churches (Mason et al., 2007, p.222). Mason et al also noted that for many young people, belief in God had simply faded as they grew older or as circumstances in life changed. They also noted that the reasons given for rejection may not be the causes of such change (Mason et al., 2007, p.223), but argue that underlying this is a general secular trend in Australia as in most English-speaking Western countries (Mason et al., 2007, p.319), and that trend is associated with a strong movement towards a high level of individualisation in which most young people see no reason to find their meaning in commitment to institutions or communities (Mason et al., 2007, p.329). In a parallel study drawing partly on the same data, Hughes (2007) argued similarly that, for most Gen Y people, belief in God was seen as peripheral to their view of the world. Belief in God was seen as a personal choice, and many young people simply did not see it as important to make the decision to believe (Hughes 2007, pp. 126-134).

American research, such as the large study conducted by Smith and Denton (2005), has described the vagueness of belief among Gen Y. In a further study, Smith and Snell (2009) noted the variety of ways in which American Gen Y were heading. They found 14 per cent of young adults were 'committed traditionalists' and another 30 per cent were 'selective adherents' accepting some aspects of their tradition but rejecting or ignoring others. Another 15 per cent were not committed to religious faith but were 'spiritually open'. However, 25 per cent were religiously indifferent, 5 per cent just had no connection to religion, and 10 per cent were critical of religion. They noted that US young adults' choices about religion reflected the inclusivism, consumerism and materialism of contemporary US young adult culture.

Another major and more recent study by Kinnaman (2011) examined the wide-spread rejection of religious institutions by young people in the USA. He cited some similar reasons as noted by Mason et al (2007) but identified more issues with the churches,

seenas over-protective, shallow and boring, repressive of sexuality, exclusive in attitudes and giving no place for doubt or discussion, rather than a rejection of religion as such. The American situation has been shown to be quite different from Australia. In the USA, most Gen Y who left the churches continue to think of themselves as Christian, while most Australian Gen Y who left the churches also left the Christian faith (Hughes 2015). However, none of these studies dealt specifically with the phenomenon of Pentecostal growth and decline.

At a time when Cox (1965) and other scholars were raising the issue of secularisation due to declining numbers in the church, the Charismatic movement of the 1960s and 1970s influenced a reawakening of belief in the supernatural and experiential forms of faith (Hutchinson, 2017). The Charismatic movement brought about a new surge of growth in the Pentecostal movement within Australia and across the world (Hutchinson, 2017). What was different about the Pentecostal movement: that it flourished while most mainstream denominations were experiencing sharp decline towards the close of the 20th century, and then began to plateau in the 21st century?

An alternative account of the changes in the Western world has argued that cultural revolution in the 1960s and 1970s led to a more experiential approach to life and a change in how personal life is conceived. Rather than life being lived in 'conformity to external authorities', life was seen as living out one's unique subjectivity, 'becoming who I truly am'. This was argued by Heelas and Woodhead in their book *The Spiritual Revolution* (2005). Heelas and Woodhead argued that this change had major ramifications for values. Conformity and duty gave way to creativity and the tolerance of a great variety of personal preferences. It fed into the feminist thinking which emerged in the 1970s, rejecting the ideas that women should find their primary role in child-rearing and looking after the home and that they were incapable of leadership in society. It also fed into the sexual revolutions which rejected the view of sex being only appropriate within a marriage as a life-long union of a man and a woman and which has led to an acceptance of many forms of sexual relationships including same-sex marriages. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) argued that this change in how life was conceived was leading not to secularization, but to the traditions and authority structures of religion giving way to the openness of spirituality. Does this account, then, explain the growth and plateauing in Pentecostal churches?

Overall, the censuses have shown that there has been an increase in the rate of growth in people identifying themselves as 'no religion'. Between 2011 and 2016, the proportion of the population saying they had no religion grew 45 per cent compared with a growth rate of just 9.5 per cent of those who identified themselves as Pentecostal (Hughes, 2017, p.4), with a particularly strong growth among Gen Y. Were some Pentecostal young people rejecting all identity with religion, like many of their contemporaries, or were they rejecting denominational identity and describing themselves simply as 'Christian'? Overall, the numbers describing themselves as 'Christian' in the censuses grew by 30 per cent between 2011 and 2016. Why were people changing their religious identity in that way?

Methodology

In order to explore religious changes among Gen Y, the researcher conducted a survey completed by 293 participants and then interviewed 55 young adults in various locations around Australia. Thus the research involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, exploring people’s experiences of their churches and of their changes in religious identity. The survey included some open-ended questions where people could explain changes in their religious identity. Overall, a positivistic approach, based on scientific methods of empirical research, was used in order to move the research away from the bias and beliefs of the researcher and look objectively at the data.A limitation of the research was that it was ‘cross sectional’, focused on people’s situations at a particular point in time, rather than longitudinal studies that would follow the same people over a period of time. However, participants were also invited to tell their stories of change. In this regard, recognition was given to the participants' social construction of the events and the development of their stories at the time.

The research was conducted between 2016 and 2018. The project was given ethical approval and consent forms were collected from all interview participants which allowed data to be used in publications (Bohr 2020).

A mixture of surveys and interviews was used to get a wide range of responses to better understand the reasons Gen Y were giving concerning changes in their religious identity and in their involvement in churches.

It was not possible to obtain a random survey of Gen Y across Australia, and this research did not attempt to draw a picture that could be generalised across the nation. The purpose of the research was to obtain as wide a range of responses among Gen Y as possible so as to hear a wide range of attitudes among Gen Y. The researcher put a paid advertisement on Facebook and produced a flyer to invite people between 18 to 34 years old who had attended church when raised and had dropped off from attending, to participate in the survey. The researcher was looking for a range of people from different backgrounds, living in different states of Australia, both male and female. The researcher was dependent on those who responded to the advertisement and completed the survey. The researcher also handed out 1,000 business cards in Melbourne and in Sydney to invite people to do the survey and asked colleagues working in different contexts to send out the invitations to do the survey to their own contacts. More than 1,500 people visited the survey on the internet, although many did not attempt the survey or did not complete it. From those who responded to the survey, 343 participants were identified (Bohr 2020).

The survey which will be referred to in this article as the Gen Y survey included twenty items which explored how people responded to the various reasons suggested by the literature for dropping out of church and changing one's religious identity. It asked questions about the factors noted in Bellamy et al (2002) *Why People Don't Go To Church* including whether people could no longer accept religious beliefs, morals, or attitudes to sexuality, or whether they had lost confidence in religious institutions. It explored whether there was simply a change in priorities and use of time or whether people had had bad experiences of one kind or another in religious contexts. It also included factors which had been included in the International Social Survey Program including the beliefs that extreme religion leads to violence and that religious thinking is contrary to scientific thinking (Hughes, 2012). Factor analysis was used to identify the patterns in those responses and these patterns are reported in the findings.

The survey also invited people to indicate if they would be prepared to be interviewed. Fifty-five participants agreed and the researcher contacted some of these for interviews. He also interviewed others through personal contacts, through parents, pastors, church leaders and friends.

While a range of young adults responded to the survey, this article focusses on the 75 participants who were raised as Pentecostal, of whom 14 were from Hillsong Church.

Changes among Gen Y who grew up in Pentecostal/Hillsong churches

While the results of the small survey cannot be generalised to the Australian scene as a whole, among those who responded to the survey more young adults identified with Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches at the time of the survey, than the numbers who indicated they had been raised in those churches. In other words, the survey suggested that while some people are leaving Pentecostal and Hillsong churches, there are also many from mainstream and Evangelical denominations who are joining them.

Hillsong Church was originally part of the Australian Christian Churches, the major Pentecostal denomination in Australia. In September 2018 Brian Houston announced that Hillsong Church would break away from that denomination and stand alone. Two-thirds of those who attended Hillsong globally were from countries outside Australia and that was one of the key factors behind the decision (Houston, 2018). As the research for this article took place between 2016 and 2018 it is important to separate the data as a result of that announcement and to look at both Hillsong and Pentecostal churches separately. As Hillsong Church is still a Pentecostal church, it sits in the group of Pentecostal churches, but individual stories and data have been explored separately where needed to highlight this change.

Among the 14 people who had been raised in Hillsong, half had rejected identification with it at the time of the interview. Among the participants in the survey and the interviews, two of them said they no longer knew how to identify themselves, two had moved to other Pentecostal churches, one to Presbyterian/Reformed Churches, one to no religion and one person identified simply as 'Christian'.

Similarly, 43 per cent of the 61 participants who been raised in other Pentecostal churches had ceased identifying with them. The movement away from the Pentecostal churches included 12 people who were identified themselves as having no religion at the time of the survey, four simply described themselves as Christian, three said they did not know how to describe themselves, four as Hillsong Church and one person each associated themselves with the Uniting Church, Baptist/Evangelical Churches and other religions. Thus, the survey results suggested that Pentecostal/Hillsong churches were not retaining those Gen Y participants who are raised in the church even though they were drawing in Gen Y from other churches and welcoming some who had no

previous connection with Christian faith. The increase in those churches would have been much greater if they were retaining those who were raised in them.

These patterns have been confirmed by other data. The SEIROS survey conducted by the Christian Research Association in 2016 with a national sample of 7,700 adult Australians found that, of those who were raised in Pentecostal churches, 23 per cent were no longer attending any church at the time of the survey, another 23 per cent had changed to a different, non-Pentecostal, denomination, and 55 per cent were continuing to attend a Pentecostal church. While most (86%) of those raised in Pentecostal churches when young attended church frequently at that time, just 56 per cent were attending any church frequently at the time of the survey (unpublished data provided by the Christian Research Association).

The SEIROS survey did not give people an opportunity to identify themselves simply as 'Christian' as occurred in the Gen Y survey. However, that identification was made in several interviews. Interview 52 (32-year-old male) who dropped out of attendance from Hillsong said:

> *I put Christianity as my religion. I didn't actually do the census as I was overseas. I have done it and I definitely would have put Christian. To put it in perspective, for my work, being a police officer, when I go to court to give evidence, for example, you either have to take an oath or an affirmation. An oath is to God and affirmation is for someone who is not religious. When I'm at work I take an oath.*

This interviewee pointed to what he saw as 'fakeness' at Hillsong Church. He indicated that he had not left the Christian faith, but had left Hillsong because of what he saw as a lack of authenticity, a focus on money and rigid forms of theology.

Survey participant 200 (28-year-old female) was raised Pentecostal and at the time of the survey identified herself simply as Christian. She said about her confidence in churches:

> *It depends on what it is in reference to. If it is about what we should believe; little to somewhat. If it is about what they do for*

> *the community then I believe they do a wonderful job. True Christianity has all the keys to living a great life in every aspect of life.*

While she had a positive experience with what her church did in the community, she struggled with the belief system of the church and as a result left the Pentecostal church to take on the generic label of 'Christian'. Interviewee 6 (27-year-old female) also put ‘Christian’ as her current identity as this participant left a Pentecostal church due to their rigid belief system and ethnocentric attitudes towards other cultures and people groups. This participant attended an emerging church that identified itself simply as Christian at the time of the interview. In general, those participants in the research who identified as Christian (not further defined) in the interviews struggled with the belief systems and cultural norms of the churches they previously attended. Among the research participants, 16 per cent of all those who had begun to describe themselves simply as 'Christian' were from Hillsong or other Pentecostal churches, a similar proportion to those who had come to describe themselves as having no religion.

Another significant group among those who had grown up in Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches were those who said they did not know how to describe their religious identity. Could these people be in transition from church identification to no religion and from no religion to exploring other identifications? Could it be that the 'don’t knows' are a pathway to no religion as Gen Y struggle with the religious values and beliefs in which they were raised, yet were unsure about the new values and beliefs they were exploring outside the church? It seems that some Gen Y participants raised in these churches had changed their identity but were unsure as to what identity to take on after they left the church. This would mean that these Gen Y participants may have been in transition.

While the literature has focused on people leaving the church and identifying as no religion, this researcher found a mixed picture. There was a lot of movement around the churches, into Pentecostal churches and out of them, reflecting the fluid ways in which Gen Y construct their lives.

Part of this movement has been away from mainstream and Evangelical churches which was seen as a movement from narrow and dogmatic belief systems that Gen Y no longer saw as viable. It seems very likely that identifying oneself as 'spiritual but

not religious', or 'as having no religion but being agnostic about God', or simply as 'Christian' or saying one does not know how to describe one's religious identity, all indicate a movement away from the binary patterns of dualistic ideologies in which one is either 'in' or 'out'. For many Gen Y participants, openness and vulnerability were found outside the churches in ways they were not found within them.

Interviewee 46 (28-year-old male), who was raised in a Pentecostal Church and at the time of the interview identified as spiritual (no religion), shared his narrative:

> *After leaving church and going down a more destructive path and lifestyle choices, I slowly started to make changes from those more destructive lifestyle patterns. That was facilitated mostly through fitness and martial arts as a means of making healthier lifestyle choices and better self-discipline and moving away from social groups that were participating in such destructive behaviour like alcohol and drugs. Then the radical change for me was six years ago when I went to India and basically everything about my life turned upside-down. Every belief system I had on what's real, what's not real, what's possible and what's not possible, what's right and wrong, everything changed and I discovered the ability to have my own spiritual journey that was one, far more connected to nature and far more open-minded in the ability to explore myself, the world around me and the concept of spirituality without feeling like it was restricted to one specific way or one specific belief system.*

This movement is about Gen Y moving away from labels that identify them collectively under a specific belief system and moving to a more fluid form of identify. Many Gen Y who had come out of controlling religious institutions shared their confusion about heavy-laden belief systems and the uncertainty they had after removing the constraints and finding a way forward. As they broke away from those churches, they had taken on other identities which hid old loyalties or expressed a neutral place which those Gen Y see as transient, progressive and refreshing.

Reasons for change

The research used factor analysis in identifying the patterns in the survey responses, which assisted in the identification of the interpretable and translatable factors given in the surveys (Bohr 2020). Factor analysis identified six major factors derived from the twenty survey items of reasons for changing religious identity. These factors were also identified as being significant for people who were interviewed. In order of their importance, they were:

1. Rejection of Christian beliefs and morals;

2. Bad experiences of church and religious organisations;

3. Narrowness and inauthenticity of religious people;

4. Feeling judged by people in religious organisations;

5. Incompatibility of the critical inquiry experienced in education with church communications; and

6. Various personal experiences of life leading to change in church participation.

1. Rejection of Christian beliefs and morals

The main reason for Gen Y to change their identity was that they could no longer accept the churches' account of Christian belief and moral values, and were particularly concerned by the churches' attitude that they had exclusive truth in their beliefs and morals. Survey participant 142 (female 21 years old) was raised a Pentecostal and at the time of the survey described herself as having no religion. She wrote: '*For several years, I still believed in the Christian God, but could not understand how it was possible to love Him when there was the ultimatum (love me or go to hell)'.* The rigidness of views concerning the issue of judgement was an issue for a number of Gen Y who placed great emphasis on inclusiveness, tolerance and non-judgemental ideas.

Those Gen Y who left the church and identified with no religion or other identities did so to move away from the value system of the churches. The areas of values that were most frequently cited by Gen Y were same-sex relationships and the lack of tolerance around different views and different lifestyles. Gen Y's experiences have suggested that they have experienced more freedom, liberty and space to be themselves,

without restriction or judgement, outside the churches. They have appreciated the freedom of not having to conform to a certain belief system or lifestyle imposed by others.

Interviewee 46 (29-year-old male) shared his experience and his views of when he was raised in a Pentecostal Church. At the time of the interview, he identified as no religion but spiritual.

> *I have a lot of appreciation for the moral and ethical conduct that I've learnt and received through my Christian upbringing. I very much struggle with my feelings of a narrow belief system that Christian idealism holds and feel that the way it's presented is in a form of indoctrination and control rather than discovery and exploration.*

Many of the Gen Y participants in the research indicated they had found greater tolerance and openness in their workplaces, amongst friends, family and other social groups which had given them the support to be themselves. They experienced the churches as places of intolerance and judgemental attitudes and, as a result, those Gen Y participants felt restricted and uncomfortable in church environments.

Another major issue was around science and the new atheism that has been propagated online. This area of science and belief is also a part of the issue of inclusion. Those who changed their beliefs during their developing years would have enjoyed staying in a community such as the church if that community had been more tolerant of different views. Once those Gen Y started to become vocal about their differences, many of them said they had no choice but to leave due to a lack of acceptance. Those Gen Y found the Church’s belief system rigid and inflexible but also intolerant of further dialogue on contentious issues.

The issue of gender equality for Gen Y was highlighted but remained a minor factor. It was evident in this research, that the gender issue was seen in the context of the lack of equality in the churches. The gender equality issue was considered in a similar way to that of same-sex relationships. These issues suggest that many Gen Y operate from a framework of intersectionality in which there is fairness and equality for all people. Gen Y moved away from the church culture because they saw it discriminating people based on gender as well as sexual preferences.

2. Bad experiences of church and religious organisations

The second factor in leaving the churches was bad experiences and lack of confidence in religious organisations. The issue of personal experience and being judged was also a factor. The interviews and surveys picked up this same lack of confidence in the churches as a result of the sexual abuse cases, and the ongoing justice issues the church is facing in relation to the cover up and lack of acknowledgement by many church leaders.

A factor highlighted in the survey responses was the dogmatism of many church leaders. This was an issue for Gen Y which contributed to their loss of confidence. The interviews also highlighted areas of concern around dogmatic leadership and leaders not being open to dialogue.

Interviewee 28 (24-year-old female) decided to be honest about her doubts in the Pentecostal church she attended and as a result was kicked out of home. This participant found the openness and vulnerability in a spiritual community outside the church:

> *I don't know if you do this or all Christians do this, but my upbringing was that if it's not Christian, it's wrong. What in it is wrong? What in it resonates with your spirituality? There needs to be a little more openness. Just because you think that something about another thing isn't that bad, it doesn't make you any less Christian or any less a faithful servant to God. You're acknowledging it and the history of this earth, which is creation. That's respectful. You're acknowledging the story. That's respectful.*

Many Gen Y participants who dropped out of church felt that the churches gave higher priority to the reputation of the institution rather than protecting and serving people. Church programs were given priority above the lives of church members: the institution being placed above people. This also reflects the intersectionality previously noted, adding to the argument that Gen Y are leaving the church due to the discrimination of marginalised groups by the church.

These people demonstrated a different value system from that of their churches. They were moving from a collectivist culture in which conformity to moral views was

important and a person's individual thoughts were secondary. Their new value system was about openness and vulnerability, as well as inclusiveness and tolerance.

3. Narrowness and inauthenticity of religious people

Many of the interviewees shared their disappointment with church leaders as well as the people in the churches. For example, interviewee 33 (32-year-old female) struggled with a female Pentecostal Pastor and her views:

> *"I don't want to be like you. I don't want to be that person. I'm open-minded". She's not okay with Muslims. She's not okay with gay people. I just find her very narrow-minded, and I was like, "Okay, I want to be the opposite of that and I want to be accepting of everyone and I want everyone to be able to have their own beliefs".*

Some research participants shared experiences of church people being judgemental. Some spoke of people in the church, reacting superficially to differences and failing to seek to understand at depth the opinions of others. Although some interviewees mentioned having positive experiences of church people, those who were dropping out of attendance and changing their religious identity mostly felt negatively about the people they had met in the churches.

Reference to 'fakeness' was made a number of times in the interviews and surveys with Pentecostal/Hillsong churches. Fakeness for Gen Y was about saying that people in the churches were doing things that looked good, but only doing them to impress the leadership of the church or for the purpose of increasing status. For example, interviewee 18 (28-year-old female) attended Hillsong when raised and said: *'I just thought people were fake and I didn't have a good personal experience. I didn't want to be part of it'.* Interviewee 52 (30-year-old male) who attended Hillsong when raised said: *'it felt a bit artificial and it felt to me that it was fake and put on. To me it didn't seem genuine'.*

There was also mention of extreme religion leading to violence and the issues that this had on their developing years when all they heard about religion was the negative side from media coverage of terrorism attacks. This was a contributing factor in the

interviews and one that has been used by the new atheists to direct young people away from religion.

4. Feeling judged by people in religious organisations

Many interviewees felt judged in some way about their own personal belief system and experience. Interviewee 55 (29-year-old male) was raised in a Pentecostal church and attended several times a week when growing up. The participant said that he left the church at 26 years old and, as a result, felt the church thought he was a backslider. He struggled with the judgemental attitude of people in the church when he attended. This participant believed in God and saw himself as a Christian but did not attend church. At the time of the survey, he said he found his sense of community in his workplace and felt much better about himself than when he was at church.

Rather than moving away from Christianity completely, some of them had moved to simply identifying themselves as 'Christian', interpreting it in their own way without feeling they had to answer to church leaders.

Some of the participants had issues with the ways the churches handled situations such as same-sex marriage, which led to them feeling judged even if the churches had not explicitly taken up the issue with them. As these participants who dropped out did not want to identify with those churches due to such issues and beliefs, but still believed in Jesus and the Bible at the time of the interview, they identified themselves simply as 'Christian'.

5. The incompatibility of critical inquiry experienced in education with church communications

Gen Y struggled with the lack of critical analysis and critical inquiry that they were used to in educational settings and the lack of openness and dialogue that they were accustomed to through education, social media and other forms of communication. Gen Y also expressed concerns about the hierarchical nature of the church and the fact that those in leadership were often seen as above others in their understanding of and in their ability to determine the mind of God.

Many of the Gen Y who participated in the research had high levels of education and an explorative nature, often desiring to understand faith and spirituality beyond what was communicated by their churches. The desire for further education among Gen Y

was mostly for their own personal educational journey, but often resulted in a rejection of the narrow views the church communicated. Many of those who dropped out of church explored different perspectives before making changes. The changes for Gen Y had been to challenge different ideas that were communicated by the church and to realign their thinking towards openness to dialogue. Survey 155 was raised a Pentecostal and at the time of the survey, identified as 'don't know'. He said;

> *I believe that there are too many rules that restrict people from entering the faith or relating to the people of faith, mostly of people with uninformed opinions or secluded views on life.*

Gen Y struggled with the ideas of one person communicating God's word and then the church responding in the affirmative without questioning those views. Gen Y wanted to engage in the conversation and believed that this form of education around dialogue was a better way of learning.

6. Various personal experiences of life leading to changes in church participation

Another reason for ceasing to attend church was Gen Y's parents who either left the church or stopped regularly attending. This affected the sample because of the strong influence family and friends had on Gen Y during and after their developing years. Some of the participants who did not have strong views also stopped attending. A compounding factor for these participants, along with others who willingly left when they had finished school, was the social connections that they had formed outside the church. Due to the churches' social connections not being as strong, those Gen Y ended up leaving the church.

Discussion and Conclusions

While this research has been based on a relatively small sample of people, it has shown that there are continuing movements within denominations. Some young adults have been moving from the mainstream and Evangelical churches into Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches. At the same time, however, the rates of growth in Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches has slowed because some people raised in those churches have been moving out of them.

There were some parallels to the stated reasons for not attending church identified by Bellamy et al. (2002, p.14), although also some significant differences. Certainly, the rejection of Christian beliefs and morals is common to this research and the research reported by Bellamy et al., as is bad experiences of church people. However, boring and unfulfilling church services, which Bellamy et al. found to be the major stated reason for not attending, was not a significant issue for the Gen Y who participated in this research.

While there are some parallels in the findings with Mason et al (2007) and Smith and Snell (2009), the reasons given in this research had greater similarity with those identified by Kinnaman (2011) in his study of young people exiting the churches: the exclusivism and lack of opportunity for debate and doubt, the repressive attitudes to sexuality and a sense of shallowness in church relationships. This research has added the personal sense of being judged and of being not accepted. It should also be noted that this study was examining people ten years or more older than the Gen Y teenagers studied by Mason et al and Hughes. Hence, adult issues of the acceptance of diverse forms of sexual expression arose here in ways not identified by Mason et al or Hughes. Indeed, the issue of feeling judged and excluded was more poignant given the adulthood of the Gen Y in this study.

The specific reasons given for changing religious identity demonstrate underlying social changes. What is evident is a strong movement towards what Mason et al described as 'individualisation' in which meaning in life is seen as a personal choice and a pre-eminent value is that of 'authenticity' in which the individual's choice is recognised and respected. As Hughes (2007) suggested, life becomes a personal construction in this context. While some people had moved to identify themselves as having 'no religion', many others continued to describe themselves as 'Christian', but did not wish to associate themselves with a particular denomination or tradition. To that extent, the movement cannot be identified simply as a process of secularisation. People are not necessarily giving up all that is spiritual. Many still regarded the Christian faith as providing some important keys to morality and to life. Nevertheless, most Gen Y approached morals and systems of belief from an individualistic point of view. They felt they had to make up their own minds about life and faith, and they expected that process to be respected. In essence, belief has become a personal construction rather than the result of adherence to a collective mindset.

This finding of belief seen as a personal construction accords well with the underlying theory of cultural change described by Heelas and Woodhead (2005): duty to roles and institutions has been replaced by living out one's unique subjectivity. However, in contrast to their research, it is not necessarily revealed in religion being replaced by spirituality. Rather, some people develop their own constructions of Christian faith, some people reject religion altogether, and only some of them take a non-religious but spiritual approach to life. As Mason et al (2007, p. 302) and Hughes (2007, p.128) have noted, Gen Y are constructing life in a variety of ways 'picking and choosing' beliefs and values in a way which makes sense to themselves. This results in a variety of religious, spiritual and secular paths of life as demonstrated by Smith and Snell (2009).

However, for many young people the major issue with the churches were the patterns of communication. They felt that the churches had not listened to them and did not respect their personal discourse. Many felt that they were judged either because the churches had explicitly rejected what they had said, or because the churches had been so dogmatically opposed to matters which they felt should at least be discussed. Instead of dialogue, they experienced authoritarian statements from leaders which led them to feeling excluded.

While the lack of growth in Hillsong and other Pentecostal churches cannot be explained largely in terms of general patterns of secularisation, what was evident was the way in which faith was seen as a personal construction, owned by the individual rather than owned by the churches as institutions. As Rose et al (2014) has argued, Pentecostals, and the charismatic movement generally, have attracted people since the 1970s because of the emphasis on the experiential dimension of faith, and there was evidence in this research that this attraction has continued for people in mainstream and Evangelical denominations. The Pentecostals have provided a major 'post-traditional' expression of faith since the cultural change of the 1970s, with their emphasis on experience rather than belief, and their adoption of popular music and popular culture in their worship (Hughes, 2016, p.35). However, for some growing up within Hillsong and the Pentecostal churches, the experiential dimension has been limited by an authoritarian approach to faith and the sense, in some places, that the institution has been given precedence over the personal construction of faith and life and the wellbeing of the individual.

What then are the implications for the churches' ministry, particularly to Gen Y? The major recommendation of this research is that the churches need to change their ways of communicating. It means that they must develop ways of listening and must engage positively and constructively with those who express different opinions. The focus of engaging with Gen Y is about respecting individuality regardless of whether one agrees or not with what the other person is saying. In order to fully engage with Gen Y, the churches must give them a safe place to communicate without judging, preaching or trying to win them over to a particular set of beliefs. Rather than focusing on the details of belief, the emphasis should be placed on the value of the person communicating their experiences. If the church is seen as constantly challenging individual beliefs, it is also seen by Gen Y as not respecting or valuing them as individuals.

The churches have previously confronted differences and as a result of those confrontations have lost the confidence of Gen Y. The church needs to contextualise its communication, so as to win back the confidence of Gen Y. This involves stepping back and observing people before jumping to conclusions and immediately communicating words that are not appropriate. The practice of listening and building credibility rather than making authoritarian statements is paramount for reconnecting with Gen Y.

This might mean developing some rather different structures. It might mean more emphasis, for example, on small groups for dialogue, rather than on large groups with dogmatic speakers. It might mean placing greater emphasis on exploring personal sacred narratives, rather than focusing on the traditions of faith. Is there a sense in which this could take Pentecostals back to their origins: to reliance on the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual?

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Peer Reviewed Articles

Contemporary Prophetism in Ghana in the light of Old Testament Precedents

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Abstract

Ghana has recently witnessed an unprecedented surge in Christian prophetism. The impact of prophetic ministry on the religious landscape of the country cannot be overlooked. Through prophetic activities, many life challenges have been dealt with. Yet, this kind of ministry is frequently characterized by several physical and spiritual abuses with associated negative effects on followers. Consequently, varied concerns have been expressed by the public concerning the biblical foundations for contemporary prophetic practices and the overall effect this ministry has on the religious and socio-economic lives of Christians. This literature-based research was therefore undertaken to explore how ancient Israel prophetism should inform contemporary Ghanaian Christian prophetism. The study argues that Ghanaian prophetic ministry is similar to prophetic ministry in ancient Israel in terms of the manifestation of the presence of God's Spirit, performance of miracles and healings, use of music and dancing, use of symbolic ritual acts and symbols such as robes, staffs, the demonstration of power, gender inclusiveness and provision for practical needs of the people. However, there is the need to check excesses such as the commercialization of the gospel and human rights abuses which sometimes characterize Ghanaian prophetism.

Keywords: Ancient Israel, Christianity, Ghanaian, Prophetism, Old Testament

Introduction

Ghana, like other African countries, has experienced remarkable growth in the Christian religion in recent decades. The 2010 Population and Housing Census

revealed that 71.2 percent of Ghana's population profess Christianity (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012, p. 63). Ghanaian Christianity is dominated by Pentecostals and Charismatics (hereafter referred to as Penteco-charismatics) comprising Christians who lay much emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The Charismatics are usually made of the elite group in Ghanaian society, but this is not always the case with the Pentecostals. Pentecostals are Christians who place a strong emphasis on salvation as a life-changing experience produced by the Holy Spirit and places high value on pneumatic phenomena (such as "'speaking in tongues', prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general") which believers must consciously and earnestly seek as these phenomena are indications of God's enabling presence among his people (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:12). In Ghana, Charismatic Christianity emerged from Pentecostalism, the two sharing many similarities (including emphasis on the Spiritual experience, democratization of gifts and others). The charismatic movement, however, focuses on city ministry, uses English as the main means of communication, is mainly led by "charismatic" individuals, and attracts more youth and upper-class people in the society. Later in the paper, the point is made that prophetism is more common among Penteco-charismatics than in mainline historic mission churches.

Ghana has recently witnessed an unprecedented surge in Christian prophetism with its huge impact on the Christian community. The prophetic activities have been authenticated by many testimonies from Christians. Consequently, prophetic ministry is highly patronized in Ghana and other parts of Africa. Yet, this kind of ministry is often characterized by several physical and spiritual abuses with associated negative results on followers. There are now theological and pastoral concerns regarding the overall effect of this kind of ministry on the religious and socio-economic life of Christians. The present author contributes to the public discourse on Ghanaian prophetism by assessing contemporary prophetic practices through the lens of Old Testament prophetic ministry. The overall purpose of the study is to investigate how ancient Israel's prophetic ministry should inform and shape contemporary prophetism in Ghanaian Christianity. The study is a literature-based research based on data obtained from books, journal articles, and other sources, discussed with a historical perspective on Ghanaian prophetism. Biblical data is used to assess contemporary Ghanaian prophetic ministry in the light of prophetic ministry in ancient Israel. The

comparative study then serves as the basis for drawing implications of the study for contemporary Christianity.

The Rise and Development of Prophecy in Ancient Israel

The Old Testament uses four different Hebrew terms to designate a prophet, namely, *ro'eh, hozeh,* '*ish* '*elohim* (or '*ish ha*-'*elohim*), and *nabi*. The term *ro'eh* (the earliest of these terms), a participial form of *ra'ah* has been translated "seer" or "diviner" (1 Sam. 9:9) (see Petersen, 2002, p. 6). The second term, *hozeh*, meaning "seer," derives from the root *hazah*, meaning "to see" (2 Sam. 24:11). The third term, '*ish* '*elohim, (*a man of God) or '*ish ha*-'*elohim* (the man of God) refers to a holy person, someone "attested in numerous religious traditions" (Petersen, 2002, p. 6) (1 Sam. 9:6-10). The final term *nabi* (plural: *nebhiim* or *nebiim*) derives from *nabu,* a loanword from the Akkadian, meaning "to call… to speak," "to proclaim," "to name" (Petersen, 2002, p. 6). *Nabi* therefore refers to one who has been called and designated by God as his spokesperson (2 Kings 9:1; 2 Chron. 12:5; Jer. 1:5). The Bible regards prophecy as an inspired word (message) from God through a prepared and sanctified vessel, the prophet. Biblical prophecy is both foretelling and forthtelling.

Foretelling/prognostication means the act of predicting the future or some course of events that will transpire in the future while forthtelling involves proclaiming a message to the reader's present situation. Ancient Israel prophets engaged mostly in forthtelling. In the process of forthtelling, they spoke about socio-religious issues such as bad leadership, idolatrous practices, false prophetic practices, abuses in priesthood, ungodly economic practices, and corrupt judicial systems, among others, and warned the unrighteous about God's judgement (Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, 1996, p. 229). At the same time, they comforted and gave hope to God's people, assuring them of future deliverance and restoration of a remnant (cf. Amos 9:13-14). Petersen (2002, p. 4) summarizes this as follows: "the notion of seeing into the future, of predicting what will happen, is only one facet of what Israel's prophets were about. To be sure, Israel's prophets could and did speak about the future, but they mainly addressed the present and referred as well to the past." In ancient Israel, the prophetic office as such arose with the ministry of Samuel (Sparks, 2000, p. 8, 15). However, the role of the "prophet" could be seen in the Pentateuch. The origins of biblical prophecy may be traced to the first Messianic prophecy in the Garden of Eden after humanity's fall (see Gen. 3:15). Old Testament historians also mention people such as Enoch (Gen. 5:22;

Jude 4); Abraham (Gen. 15; 20:7); Moses (Deut. 34:10; Hos. 12:13); Aaron (Exod. 7:1); Miriam (Exod. 15:20; Mic. 6:4); Eldad, Medad, and the seventy Elders (Exod. 24:9-11; Num. 11:24-29); and Deborah (Judges 4:4-5) as pre-canonical prophets who experienced divine revelations and auditions (Waltke, 2007, p. 808). Even though the above personalities can be classified as prophets, prophetic ministry in ancient Israel did not receive prominence until the ministry of Samuel and the institution of the monarchy.

Two main factors necessitated the rise of the office of prophet and prophetic literature in ancient Israel. First, prophetic ministry arose due to threats to the worship of Yahweh, for example the emphasis on the worship of Baal under King Ahab (869 – 850 BCE) and his queen, Jezebel, who actively oppressed Yahwism (1 Kings 18:4). God raised up the prophets in order to check the threat of a king leading Israel in a manner corresponding to the Ancient Near Eastern practices of kingship (Coogan, 2008, p. 78). God instituted the prophetic ministry to serve as his voice to the king. Second, God raised prophets to speak for the voiceless in the society. Sometime after their settlement in the Promised Land, the economic and social developments in Israel and Judah gave rise to a stratified society in which the upper class oppressed the ordinary people (Amevenku and Boaheng, 2020, p. 96-97). Without the prophets no one could speak on behalf of the underprivileged. The prophet Amos is outstanding in his role as the voice of the voiceless and he demonstrated that justice and righteousness are absolutely parts of the presence of God as the life-bestowing force (5:6-7). He made the people understand that Yahweh had no interest in rituals (5:21-27) but instead sought justice and righteousness (1:17).

The account of Samuel's choice of Saul as king of Israel contains the first appearance of the prophets as a group. They are depicted as a group of people who came down from a sanctuary to the accompaniment of musical instruments like flute, timbrel and harp, and responding to this abundant musical tune with ecstatic cries (1 Sam. 10:5-6). The contagious nature of the ecstasy made Saul also prophesy when he saw them (1 Sam. 10:10). André (1982, p. 191) explains ecstasy as "an intensive experience which totally engages the individual, a psychical state characterized by the fact that the person is much less open to outward stimuli than in a normal state." In addition, Old Testament prophetic ministry was characterized by use of music and dancing, use of symbolic ritual acts and symbols such as robes, among others (see 2 Kgs 3:15; Anderson, 2003, p. 181-182).

Prophetic ministry in ancient Israel changed markedly in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. While prophets of the tenth and ninth century are more often presented as “advisors to the kings” who helped the kings to discern the will of God, most of the eighth century prophets (following Amos) paid more attention to the people, the nation Israel and sometimes other nations (Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, 1996, p. 226). After the eighth-century prophets came the prophets who ministered in the latter period of the Divided Kingdom and also acted as historians, documenting the chronicles of the Jewish people (Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, 1996, p. 227). Much of what is known about the monarchy came to us from the prophetic perspective. Their contribution in this direction has, to a large extent, influenced the use of the expressions “Former” and “Latter Prophets” for some cluster of books in the Old Testament. The Old Testament testifies to this fact in 1 Chronicle 29:29 where Samuel the seer, Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer are said to have documented events concerning king David.

The foundation of ancient Israelite prophetic ministry is divine calling which refers to God’s invitation to people to play a part in, and enjoy the benefits of, his gracious redemptive purposes. God decides and determines who will be his spokesperson. Therefore, nobody could claim to be a prophet without first of all receiving a call from God. The call to be a prophet could come through another human being (for example, God used Elijah to call Elisha; see 1 Kings 19:16). In the case of Jeremiah, his call was predetermined by God even before his birth (cf. Jer. 1:1-3). The call of Moses came in a spectacular circumstance (Ex. 3:1-15). Samuel’s call came in his childhood through God’s audible voice (1 Sam. 3). Divine calling came with a specific assignment to be accomplished through divine influence.

Old Testament prophets were empowered by God’s Spirit for their specific tasks. The importance of God’s Spirit in the prophetic ministry is seen in the Elisha’s request to Elijah. The whole of Elijah’s ministry was characterized by God’s Spirit, that could carry him away at any time (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16). Only God was able to accomplish the miracles performed by Elijah through the Spirit. When Elisha is given a last request by Elijah, he asked for a “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit (2 Kings 2:9, 15). While this request is not explicitly for God’s Spirit, Elisha must certainly refer to God’s Spirit, whose power and influence he had observed in the ministry exploits of his master, Elijah. Because of the Spirit, the two prominent figures of Elijah and Elisha were able to stem the tide of apostasy during the Omride dynasty. Their ministries were characterized by supernatural activities.

In addition, the prophet's encounter with God's Spirit gave him a compelling sense of call for which reason Micah (for example) could say "I truly am full of the Spirit of the Lord" (Mic. 3:8). Old Testament prophets were very conscious of the Spirit's presence with them and were confident of the authority they possessed in their prophetic ministry. Zechariah's assertion that the nation hardens their hearts against Yahweh's word given by the Spirit through the prophets (Zech. 7:12) underlines the fact that the prophets knew the word they carried was from God through his Spirit.

Even more importantly, ancient Israel's prophets were covenant enforcing mediators who sought to ensure that the Sinaitic Covenant remained the foundation of Israelite religion (Ex. 19—24). They encouraged the people to be righteous before God and to look after the weak and vulnerable members (Bandstra, 2009, p. 95). According to Stout (2003, p. 10-11), God always declared through the prophets how he wanted his people to conduct themselves before him— with fidelity, obedience and holiness: "When the people disregarded the intention of the covenant, their treatment of the poor and the powerless—the orphan, the widow, and the stranger—were indicators of the disease of their society" and ancient Israelite prophets had the courage to confront them. Courageous prophets like Nathan and Elijah stood up to the royal families, insisting that even powerful kings like David and Ahab must obey the covenant and ensure justice (see 1 Kings 19; 2 Sam. 12:1ff). The messages delivered were mostly warnings to Israel and other nations to repent in order to avoid God's impending judgment. For example, the prophet Amos criticized the rich for trampling on the poor and the perversion of justice (Amos 5:21-22). Later the exilic prophets gave messages of hope and restoration. They reminded the people of their covenant with God and the faithfulness of God to deliver them from the hands of the captors if they turned to God in repentance. Post exilic prophets encouraged the people to rebuild the temple and restore the worship of God in its true sense (Hag. 1:3-11).

Furthermore, true ancient Israelite prophets were characterized by high moral integrity. Even though information about the holiness of the prophets is rare, it is generally accepted that God would use holy people as his prophets. It might be argued that God saw fit to use people whose moral behavior was not always beyond reproach in other offices, such as Moses the law giver, Aaron the high priest, and David the king. Yet, it is also clear, for example, that Nathan would not have had an effective word of reproach for David if he himself had been a man of unbridled passions. An immoral prophet was considered false because a true prophet was expected to set a

high moral standard, to speak against sin, to shun evil and to stand for social change in ancient Israel (Jer. 23: 9-15, 23-32).

With this brief introduction to prophecy in ancient Israel, the study proceeds to consider prophetism in Ghana.

Brief Account of Ghanaian Prophetism

Scholars trace the origins of Ghanaian prophetic ministry to the period between 1900 and 1950. Different reasons (including social, political, or religious conditions, or a combination of these) have been assigned by different scholars for the emergence and continuing existence of prophets in Ghana (Baëta, 1962, p.3). The African world view served as a catalyst for the emergence of the prophetic phenomenon. According to Tutu (1995, p. xvi) religion permeates all aspects of the life of an African. As a result, people find spiritual reason(s) for every event that occurs in life. The death of a person, chronic disease in one's life, childlessness of a woman and other similar situations are all believed to have spiritual causes. The African worldview was further strengthened by the missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa. The missionaries introduced a personalized devil and associated traditional gods with demons, a situation which eventually strengthened Africans' belief in witchcraft and demons. Consequently, African Christians find it extremely difficult to expel belief in supernatural powers from their minds (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2002, p. 29-34). Unfortunately, therefore, after publicly professing faith in Jesus Christ, some African Christians return from church only to make libations to various traditional deities. Thus, there is an "injection of elements of the African primal religion and beliefs into Christianity" (Amevenku and Boaheng, 2015, p. 90). African Christians frequently live in fear of attack from the spiritual world. Such a state of those converted to Christianity serves as a fertile ground for the emergence and acceptance of prophetism in Ghana.

The first major prophetic activity in the country was by Prophet William Wade Harris, a Liberian, who in 1914 appeared in Nzema area of south-western Ghana. Harris was a prisoner serving a sentence for allegedly involving himself in a protest against the repressive policy of the Americo-Liberian government toward the Grebo people when God called him into ministry (Larbi, 2001, p. 58). While in prison, an angel visited him and commissioned him as a prophet of God. Apparently, the Spirit descended upon Harris

thrice after which he burst into tongue- speaking (Larbi, 2001, p. 58). The activities of Harris were characterized by a very high uncompromising attitude towards tribal gods, adaptation of indigenous way of worship, a high evangelistic drive, and demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

After Harris came Prophet Sampson Oppong, a native of Akontanim in the Bono Region of Ghana. He was an illiterate fetish practitioner who was converted to Christ through a dramatic encounter with God in which he was instructed to burn all his fetishes (Larbi, 2001, p. 66). This happened while he was in prison for embezzlement in Ivory Coast (c. 1913). He resisted this and other admonitory experiences over several years until 1917, when as a result of a particularly vivid vision, he began an itinerant preaching career, calling for destruction of fetishes and abandonment of magic and witchcraft. His activity as a destroyer of talismans earned him the accolade "Osebetutu", remover of talisman (*osebe*). Though he was illiterate, God endowed him with a remarkable knowledge of the Bible. In 1923, the Methodist Church claimed to have twenty thousand (20 000) converts through the activities of Oppong (Larbi, 2001, p. 67). From that time, prophetism became part of Ghanaian Christianity. The rise of Penteco-Charismatic churches also increased prophetic phenomena in Ghana. Today, prophets have become renowned for their teachings on prosperity, prophecy about people's personal lives and miraculous deeds. Stories about prophetism fill the airwaves, newspapers, television stations and social media.

Some Features of Contemporary Ghanaian Prophetism

1 Prophetism and Human Existential Issues

Prophetic ministry in Ghana usually employs the problem-solving approach to ministry. Followers of prophetic ministry experience many benefits from the movement. For example, in the full view of their congregation, some prophets have caused cripples to walk, the dumb to speak and so on. All kinds of sickness (including cancer, hepatitis, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, HIV/AIDS) are healed through this ministry. Some prophets even claim to have the ability to raise the dead. The poor are relieved of their plight through so-called "miracle money," where people find money in their bank accounts which they have not previously deposited and hence cannot account for. Some prophets offer miracle babies who are conceived through supernatural power.

The prophetic ministry has a large following due to help they offer followers (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013).

Yet at the same time, over-concentration on finding solutions to life challenges eventually has negative consequences for church members. Ghanaian prophetic activities are mainly meant to solve life problem of followers, often at the expense of making committed disciples of Christ. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005, p. 80) rightly notes that the over-emphasis on the immediate benefits derived from prophetism results in the lack of committed Christians in most prophetic-oriented churches. It must be noted, however, that not all prophetic-oriented churches use the problem-solving approach to ministry. In those churches where solutions to human problems us overemphasized, people leave the church after finding solution to their problem because such churches lack effective teaching that enhance effective discipleship. One hardly hears the prophet preach effectively. Therefore, most followers of such prophetic-oriented churches, after realizing that their spiritual growth cannot be enhanced by these churches, go back to their former churches after their problem is solved. This is the reason why such churches fail in the long term (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, p. 80-82).

Contemporary Ghanaian prophetism is also about foretelling. Ghanaian prophets claim the ability to tell the followers what lies ahead of them in life. There is a recent trend in Ghanaian prophetism where prophets use their 31st December Watch Night Services to deliver people from past demonic influences and to prophesy longevity, prosperity, good health, God's favor and other blessings upon people's lives. At these services many prophets also reveal imminent calamitous events such as the death of prominent figures in the nation. Rev. Isaac Owusu-Bempah (founder of Glorious Word and Power Ministry church), for example, on 31st December 2018 predicted the death of the national chief Imam Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu in 2019 (Niba, 2019, online article) which failed to happen. In the view of Asamoah-Gyadu (2020, p. 6) many people consider prophecies of this nature as "prophetic blackmailing for material gain" because "most of the personalities to face misfortune tend to be high profile public figures." The reason for this reasoning by Asamoah-Gyadu is that in most cases these prominent people about whom prophecies are given seek spiritual assistance from the prophets to avert the calamities that are about to befall them. The spiritual assistance given is usually associated with *akwankyerɛ,* meaning spiritual direction or literally, showing the way. The beneficiary pays for the services rendered by the prophet.

2 Prophetism and Spiritual Renewal

Prophetism in ancient Israel was meant to bring spiritual renewal to the people. The prophetic message was meant to turn people's heart from other gods to God and to encourage them to let their vertical relationship with God have a corresponding impact on their horizontal relationship with other people. Similarly, the purpose of Christianity includes the renewal of the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. Prophetism in Ghana is often accompanied by renewal that takes place "in the form of personal, often dramatic, conversions, miraculous acts demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of Pentecostal phenomenon, embodying charismatic or spiritual gifts into Christian practices" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 37). The democratization of the *charismata pneumatika* (spiritual gifts or things) which is a key focus in prophetic-oriented churches (spiritual churches or *Sunsum sore*) was not given much attention in the mainline historic churches (that is, mission churches) in Ghana until recently. The experience of the Pentecostal phenomenon and the development of spiritual gifts has been the priority of prophetic churches since their emergence. In the prophetic churches, every believer must appropriate the spiritual gifts as fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (2:28-30).

Some mainline historic churches initially reacted negatively to prophetism when Pentecostal (spiritual/prophetic) churches emerged. For example, the Methodist Church of Ghana described the spiritual phenomenon of one of their members (Egyanka Appiah) as "occultic" and even placed an injunction on him. Appiah's conversion resulted in the manifestation of the Spirit through speaking in tongues, recourse to intense prayer vigils and divine communication through dreams and visions (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 45). Having been expelled from the Methodist Church, Appiah founded the Musama Disco Christo Church. It is interesting to note that the spiritual/prophetic churches eventually influenced the liturgical and pastoral practices of the mission churches. For example, speaking in tongues, clapping and dancing at churches services, are some of the practices that mission churches later adopted from spiritual/prophetic churches. The reforms that the activities of spiritual churches brought in the historic churches highlight "their invaluable contribution to the changing face of Ghanaian Christianity" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 37). Prophetic churches provide more innovative, exciting and stimulating services that tend to catalyze the spiritual experiences of their followers.

Consequently, many people drift from mission churches to prophetic churches to enjoy the kind of service which they believe is meaningful and relevant to their situation. Prophetic churches are “more enjoyable” because of their effective inculturation. Here, “inculturation” refers to the sensitivity that Prophetic churches show towards the African primal worldview and African realities in the mediation of the Christian gospel. These churches are able to synthesize Christianity and African religio-cultural worldview and therefore make Christianity applicable to the existential issues of the Christian (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005. p. 39). For example, these churches respond better to the spiritual needs of the followers than mission churches. In the Ghanaian worldview, there are myriads of evil spirits around the human person. Everything that happens physically (including, protracted illness, accident, death, or any other misfortune) is said to have spiritual antecedents. For this reason, a key aspect of African religious expectation is to have protection from spiritual forces. Prophetic churches take this African cosmology seriously and provide their followers with the needed assistance. On the contrary, most mission churches (based on the theology they inherited from their Western counterparts) either fail to accept the existence of these forces or fail to provide theological and pastoral response to them.

Prophetic churches are attractive to Ghanaians because they provided the needed spiritual resource to overcome evil forces which tend to cause havoc in people’s life. Victory over charms, medicines, divination, witchcrafts, sorcery and other evils are often attributed to the spiritual empowerment received through the prophetic ministry. The prophetic churches have also distinguished themselves in the area or healing and deliverance. Healing is very important because it releases people from an obstacle to human fulfilment (Milingo, 1984, p. 24-25).

There are, however, some cases where the messages preached by some contemporary prophets fail to achieve spiritual renewal. Some prophets over-concentrate on prosperity such that followers tend to think that life is all about acquiring wealth and living affluently. Atiemo, for example, has observed that some Penteco-charismatic prophetic activities have failed to promote individual and societal moral transformation, especially in terms of “concrete acts of justice, obedience, mercy, compassion, honesty and loving deeds” (Atiemo, 2016, p. 7). Other Church traditions such as the Methodists, the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics are not completely exempted from the emphasis on prophetism, though these churches do it in moderation as compared to Penteco-charismatics.

3 Prophetism and the Call into Ministry

Ghanaian prophetic figures have always claimed to have been called by God for the propagation of the gospel. I have already mentioned that Harris received his call through supernatural experience. As reported, “while in prison, he had a trance-visitation from the Angel Gabriel who called him to be a prophet, to preach the gospel of repentance, to destroy “fetish” worship and to baptize” (Shank as cited in Johnson, 2016, p. 6). Harris once defended his call in these words: “I am a prophet of God above all religions and freed from the control of all men.” (Shank as cited in Johnson, 2016, p. 32). The prophet was called to preach repentance just as prophets of ancient Israel were called to do. Also, Harris was to destroy “fetish” in the same way that prophets of ancient Israel were called to destroy the idols of the surrounding communities. The call of most Ghanaian prophets is credible when their ministries are assessed in the light of biblical principles. The fruit of “genuinely-called prophets” usually result in mass conversion to Christ. For example, Harris’ ministry in just two years brought one hundred and twenty thousand souls to Christ (Bediako, 2000, p. 85).

However, the call of some contemporary Ghanaian prophets is more dubious. In 2009, Akomadan-Afrancho-based traditional priest, Kwaku Bonsam stormed a church at Kato (a suburb of Berekum in the Bono Region) to retrieve juju (the use of as amulets, and spells in religious practice for evil purposes) that he claimed to have given to “Pastor” Collins Agyei-Yeboah (popularly known as Papa Yopoo), founder of the Vision Charismatic Ministry (see Nrenzah 2015, p. 115). “Pastor” Agyei-Yeboah allegedly went to Nana Bonsam to assist him to succeed in his church business but persistently refused to honour his annual obligation of paying five hundred and fifty Ghana cedis (GH¢550.00) to Kwaku Bonsam’s deity, “Kofi oo Kofi.” According to Bonsam’s claim his fetish was the source of power with which the pastor performed his magico-religious activities to attract followers. Instead of destroying idols, these prophets rather seek power from them and yet claim to be Christians.

4 Prophetism and Morality

The main message of the biblical prophet is to call people to repentance. The prophet therefore speaks vehemently against sin. Some contemporary prophets show high ethical standards in both private and public lives. But some other contemporary

prophets exhibit a very high level of immorality. Sexual abuse involving contemporary prophets is frequently reported. There are ministers who engage in sexual affairs with their Church members, associate ministers' wives and sometimes even defile children.

Apostle Kofi Nkansah-Sarkodie, in the October 25, 2011 issue of *The Chronicle,* is reported to have drawn attention to cases of fornication, rape, armed robbery, adultery, stealing, and fraud, among other vices allegedly involving some "men of God." Not long ago, two self-styled prophets, namely Joseph Braimah, 22, and Derick Kweku Sakyi Baisie, 31 (alias Kweku Money) were arrested for allegedly defrauding many people to the tune of two hundred and eighty thousand Ghana cedis (GH ¢298,000.00) by giving them fake prophecies (Abbey, 2017, online article). They are said to have used prophecies of death, accidents, spiritual attacks on businesses and family members, among other dangers, to extort money from their victims in the name of saying special prayers for them. Baisie was arrested at Nana Boame's shrine (a renowned fetish priest shrine at Akyem Abirem in the Eastern Region) where he was seeking protection and powers to avoid arrest (Abbey, 2017, online article). This confirms Obeng's assertion that deliverance practices in Ghana are characterized by "the demand for monetary support from the vulnerable in exchange for blessing…" (Obeng, 2014, p. 14). Some prophets "charge exorbitantly, sometimes even before attempting a cure. The patient's generous donation in the form of a tithe is sometimes made a prerequisite for healing" (Umoh, 2013, p. 663). Rather than allowing members to give freely and cheerfully, most contemporary prophets manipulate the followers during offering time. Some prophets ask that the offering be placed at their feet so that no one can give a "small" amount because no one would like to be associated with the least offering. Special prayers, supposedly carrying more blessings, are offered for those who are able to give higher amounts. In effect, they have turned the service of God into a gold mine by exploiting unsuspecting members of the public. Some of these people are "fake" Christians who are operating in the name of God. Others are Christian "prophets" who may belong to any denomination (whether mission churches, Pentecostal movements or Charismatic movements) who take advantage of the vulnerability of their followers to exploit them for personal gains.

Implications for Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity

This discussion so far underscores the fact that Ghanaian prophetic ministry has a huge impact on the Christian landscape. The prophetic ministry is highly patronized

because of it helps its adherents to deal with human existential issues. The Church needs the prophetic ministry for its edification and growth. The prophetic ministry has, however, attracted criticisms because of the “bad nuts” among contemporary prophets. Instead of throwing the bathwater with the child, this author argues that the “bad nuts” must be separated from the good ones to bring out the usefulness and significance of the good ones. It is in this light that the study offers some principles below for testing the validity of the prophetic ministry.

First of all, there is the need to question the source of authority of people who claim to have been called into the prophetic ministry. This is important because a fake call is bound to result in fake ministry. The study has noted that there are some Ghanaian prophets whose calling into ministry have been challenged by some traditional African priests. In this light it is important to state that the fact that one’s ministry produces results (alone) does not mean that his/her ministry is authentic. The devil has also called people to use miracles to deceive believers. A key test for the source of authority for a prophet may be the “fruit test” which Jesus gave as a principle for judging those who claim to be doing the work of God (Matt 7:16-17). This test is particularly concerned with the impact the ministry of the prophet has on the church. Any prophetic ministry which does not have the overall effect of building up the body of Christ is fake.

The fulfilment of prophecy is another key test for the authenticity of a prophet (Morrison, 2014, p. 65-78). A true prophecy is bound to be fulfilled (cf. MacArthur, 2003, 228-229). The Israelites asked the Lord, “How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?” (Deut. 18:21). Moses told the Israelites: “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken” (Deut. 18:22; cf. Jer. 28:8, 9). The evil character and conduct of false prophets would be revealed by the failure of their prophecies to come true (Comfort and Lins eds., 2001, p. 36). While this is a good test, it is often difficult to apply because not all prophecies are short-term. There are some prophets who gave within their long-term prophecies a short-term one that was quickly fulfilled (Jer. 28:16, 17). The obvious question is: For how long should we wait before saying that a prophecy has not been fulfilled? A prophecy may not come to pass in the life time of the prophet or his audience and yet may be authentic. This principle is therefore more suitable for prophecies that are time bound. Another difficulty in applying this rule is that the predictions of a false prophet could also be

fulfilled (Deut. 13:1, 2). Therefore the “fulfilment” principle alone is not enough to determine whether a prophecy is from God or not. Also, some prophecies are conditional and if the conditions are not fulfilled, they cannot be fulfilled (Jer. 27:8-10; see Newton, 2010a, 65). Jonah’s prophecy was authentic but was not fulfilled because the people of Nineveh changed from their evil ways (Jonah 3). Another problem with this test is that some Old Testament true prophecies were given by “false” prophets (for example, Balaam’s prophecy in Num. 23-24; cf. Newton, 2010b, p. 61).

As a public phenomenon, ancient Israel prophetic ministry was built on sound theology. Therefore, every true Ghanaian prophetic ministry must also be based on biblically grounded theology. Prophets must also speak for the voiceless and the marginalized. There is the need to study the Bible diligently and to give authentic and biblically grounded teachings to enhance discipleship. Theological formulation (by both prophets and non-prophets) must be subject to the scrutiny of God’s word. For example, since God’s law prohibits worshipping idols (Ex. 20:4-5), an Israelite prophet who led others to worship other gods was a false prophet (Deut. 13:2).

Idolatry in our modern society may be in the form of worshipping wealth. Prosperity theology, propagated mostly by those in the prophetic ministry, has the tendency of making people idolize wealth. Prosperity theology states that “God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty” and that one can have access to these blessings through “a positive confession of faith” (Gifford, 2007, p. 20). Such prosperity theology, which most Ghanaian prophets propagate, promotes wealth accumulation, and makes people measure the success of one’s life by the person’s wealth. In Ghana, like other parts of Africa, Prosperity Theology is highly patronized because many people live in abject poverty (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015, p. 174). None one can deny the fact that God blesses his people materially (see for example Gen. 13:1-2 for evidence of Abraham’s material prosperity). However, the problem in the Ghanaian situation is that Prosperity teachers place too much emphasis on wealth and tend to consider it as basis of human worth. There is also weak hermeneutical basis for some of the claims of Prosperity teachers and so Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, p. 174) asserts that “prosperity thinking usually relies too much on proof-texting and so tends to interpret the Scriptures in a selective manner, without due attention to context. Its message tends to be one-sided.” The point here is not that Prosperity teachings are entirely wrong or that prosperity is only propagated by

prophet-led churches. Rather, the point is that prophet-led churches place huge emphasis on prosperity and hence tend to ignore other relevant aspects of the Christian gospel.

If prophecies have to agree with God's revelation (Isa. 30:8) and the people hearing it have to judge it according to God's word, then the audience of prophecy must have a deep personal knowledge of God's Word so that they can use that knowledge to test the truthfulness of the prophecy. Knowledge about God's word comes through effective studies. Therefore, the Church must be a teaching Church. Any church that does not have an effective teaching ministry deprives its members of the opportunity to have access to the word of God and use it to judge messages proclaimed in the church. This test is more difficult to falsify, though it is not totally immune against falsification (see 2 Cor. 11:13, 14). Nonetheless, those with adequate knowledge of the truth as revealed by Christ will not be easily deceived.

Another important implication of the study is that true prophetic ministry must be ethically sound. This ethical test is one of the most effective tests for judging knowing which prophet works for God and which one is for Satan. False prophets may mention the name of Jesus in the ministration, they may help other people in various ways, but they do not live up to the God's laws and do not clearly speak out against sin. Their works and ministry tend to make sin appealing to their followers. Ezekiel makes a similar point when he accused false prophets of strengthening the hands of the wicked, so that they do not turn from their wicked ways to save their life (Eze. 13:22). In the broader context of the Bible, false prophets are characterized by arrogance (2 Pet. 2:18), deceit (Acts 13:6-10), and the commercialization of the gospel (2 Pet. 2:3, 13). They may give the impression of being holy, even saying all the right things, yet they are only wolves dressed in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). It is important that the believing community applies their gift of discernment to distinguish between true and false prophets. The Holy Spirit gives such ability to believers and so it is also the responsibility of Christians to rely on the Spirit to guide them in this regard. This principle is, however, imperfect because no one can know all about a person's character except God; therefore, one cannot rely on only the known aspect s of a person's life to give a complete judgment on the person's ministry (Newton, 2010a, p. 65).

The foregoing discourse makes it clear that there are limitations in using human criteria to judge the authenticity of one's ministry. Final Judgment should therefore be left to God. The above principles may, however, be applied in order not to make avoidable mistakes in following fake prophets. One would agree with Newton (2010a, p. 65) that not all these principles would apply in every situation, but a prophet who fails in any of them is suspect.

Conclusion

The study has pointed out both negative and positive aspects of prophetism in Ghanaian Christianity. Prophetism resonates well with the African worldview and provides solutions to many African existential issues. Prophetic ministry in contemporary Ghana also does well to contextualize the Christian faith to make Christianity very meaningful to believers. Through the prophetic ministry many people have converted to Christ including people who were fetish priests. The impact of prophetism in the growth of Ghanaian Christianity can therefore not be overlooked.

However, there are some excesses associated with the ministry of some modern prophets, including the commercialization of the gospel, human right abuse, syncretic tendencies and others.

In the view of the author, the abuses associated with the ministry of some prophets should not make anyone downplay or discount the importance of the prophetic ministry. Like any other kind of ministry, not everyone's ministry may be authentic and, the non-authenticity of one or two ministers does not invalidate the ministry of others. Therefore, "negative instances" of or excesses in prophetic practices should not obliterate the initiative of prophetic-oriented churches as genuine attempts aimed at reviving Christianity in the Ghanaian setting.

Even more importantly, determining whether a prophet is true or false is not that simple due to the complex nature of the prophetic ministry. Modern prophets need to bear in mind that the call into ministry is a privilege that comes along with certain demands on their life, both inward and outward. The call demands purity of life, serving as a model to others and pursuing God's agenda no matter what the cost. This paper contends that it is very likely that some contemporary prophets have called themselves into ministry to pursue their self-centred ambitions or to serve the course

of Satan under guise of the anointing if the Holy Spirit. Therefore, contemporary Christians must shine their light to expose darkness.

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Bringing about forgiveness: Up-dating theory, reconceptualising practice

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Abstract

Forgiveness features in the discourse of multiple disciplines including theology, law and psychology. It is also a central concern for practitioners who work with clients who have suffered harm. However, key aspects of forgiveness remain debated and therapeutic practices appear to be somewhat formulaic. Therefore, the current paper will explore the structural and dynamic features of forgiveness and, in light of these, endeavour to improve therapeutic practice. Initially, forgiveness is disambiguated from synonyms such as reconciliation. Forgiveness is, however, consistent with the dual notion of pardon and release. Key intrapersonal dynamics of forgiveness are then identified using examples of therapeutic best-practice. Uniquely, the interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness are explored according to General Systems Theory, Cybernetics and Social Network Theory. From these related perspectives forgiveness becomes a response to broken relational bonds, that is attachments, and the need for a community of people, broadly defined, to maintain its social integrity through homeostatic mechanisms. Ultimately, current therapeutic practices are questioned with respect to an implied bias towards system-wide needs at the expense of client autonomy. Given this, practitioners are encouraged to consider “forgiveness work” as existential in character and not primarily cognitive/emotional.

Key words:

Forgiveness; counselling; ministry; General Systems Theory; Cybernetics; Social Network Theory.

Introduction

While forgiveness has always been a part of theological discourse and good pastoral care, it is only in the last three decades that researchers have sought to investigate it from a psychological perspective (Enright, 1991; Freedman & Chang, 2010; Worthington, 2005). This research has yielded important insights for practitioners, including pastors, chaplains, psychologists and counsellors, as well as providing considerable benefit to clients. In particular, forgiveness is now seen as a way to effectively engage hurt/suffering, corrosive anger, anxiety/depression, poor self-esteem and hope (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Fitzgibbons, 1986, 1998; Hope, 1987; Malcolm et al., 2005; Ripley & Worthington, 2002; Rye et al., 2005). This variety of applications, coupled with the rise of trauma-informed practice, has almost turned forgiveness into a panacea. For this reason caution is warranted; even more so since therapeutic practices have developed somewhat independently of theory. For instance, the Forgiveness Process Model (FPM, explained below), being the gold standard therapeutic approach, represents only a “best estimate” (Freedman et al., 2005, p. 394) and a conglomeration of “virtually all published works that describe intervention models” at the time of its development (Hebl & Enright, 1993, p. 659). It is therefore the authors’ contention that if further strides are to be made in helping people to forgive, then theory must be up-dated and therapeutic practice considered in light of this.

How is forgiveness structured?

It is interesting, and puzzling, to note that “…there is little consensus [in the literature] regarding what forgiveness is.” (Freedman & Zarifkar, 2016, p. 46). Yet without this basic knowledge it is difficult to see how we can advance the study and practice of forgiveness.

For instance, forgiveness and reconciliation are often used interchangeably but are very different (Gulliford, 2004; Knutson et al., 2008). It is possible to forgive but not reconcile with another person, as may occur when one forgives a deceased parent. More curiously, and perhaps at odds with Worthington and Drinkhard (2000), two people can reconcile yet still harbour unforgiveness (Waal & Pokorny, 2005). A simple example of this is divorced parents who effectively co-parent in the best interests of

their children without forgiving each other's wrongs. In this way we come to learn that while forgiveness is virtuous, reconciliation is pragmatic.

In addition, forgiveness must also be distinguished from condoning, forgetting, excusing or justifying harmful behaviour (Gulliford, 2004; Wade & Worthington, 2005). Nor is forgiveness the absence of unforgiveness. Because of these exclusions, forgiveness now fits well with a broader justice framework. This is useful given that forgiveness is applied after a wrong has been committed. More precisely, forgiveness aligns to the justice-infused synonym of "pardon". Yet to pardon another person is a behaviour. What is the psychological change within a victim that aligns with pardon and heralds forgiveness? This interior shift has been termed "release" and has a number of positive psychological correlates. Therefore, , a composite definition of forgiveness has emerged which encapsulates pardon and release (Knutson et al., 2008; Worthington, 2003).

Yet beyond this two-part definition it must also be recognised that forgiveness has core elements, as well as features which remain debated. Core elements include: (1) that a wrong has been committed; (2) that forgiveness can only occur after the offence has ceased; and (3) that forgiveness can only occur once a person has become aware of their unfair treatment (American Psychological Association, 2006). In working towards forgiveness, we must also consider it to be a multi-dimensional psychological construct having cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, motivational, existential and transcendent elements (American Psychological Association, 2006; Belicki et al., 2020; Lichtenfeld et al., 2019). Forgiveness is also recognised to be a lengthy process entered into by a victim as opposed to a momentary shift in one's psychological state (American Psychological Association, 2006).

The debated elements of forgiveness present as a series of questions whose answers have important implications for researchers and practitioners alike (American Psychological Association, 2006). For example:

1. Does forgiveness exist on a continuum or only in binary form? This is an important question for researchers and practitioners in the West who often assume, given a worldview influenced by two millennia of Christianity, that forgiveness must be offered once, utterly and in perpetuity.
2. Does forgiveness, as a virtue, require a virtuous mind-set? This has important implications for researchers when seeking to understand the interpersonal

aspects of forgiveness, and for practitioners when called upon to assist with reconciliation.

3 To what extent do intrapersonal, as opposed to interpersonal, forces contribute to forgiveness? This is a critical issue for the development of both theory and practice and is considered by the authors in the remaining sections of this paper.

4 Is self-forgiveness the same as, or different to, forgiving others? That self-forgiveness ignores the interpersonal, is often associated with shame, and is more difficult to achieve may suggest it is a special case, or only a related construct.

5 Is anonymous and *en masse* forgiveness — as may occur after armed conflict — the same as, or different to, forgiving a limited number of known others? Again, this may well be a special case better dealt with under a different psychological rubric.

To begin to grapple these questions, and therefore extend beyond current understandings, let us consider both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness.

The intrapersonal dynamics of forgiveness

The intrapersonal dynamics of forgiveness are most clearly observed in counselling when working with a client who has suffered harm (i.e. a victim). Prominent amongst counselling modalities used to bring about forgiveness are two divergent therapeutic approaches: (1) Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT); and (2) the Forgiveness Process Model (FPM).

EFT considers unforgiveness to be “unfinished business” (Perls cited in Malcolm & Greenberg, 2000, p. 185) which prevents a client from moving on while also being characterised by a hyperaroused state (Greenberg et al., 2008). That EFT pays a significant debt to Gestalt Theory means that unforgiveness is also held to be currently felt (Malcolm & Greenberg, 2000). As such, a moment-by-moment, non-linear, process-experiential approach is used to effect positive change (Elliott et al., 2004).

Through the use of a diverse set of interventions EFT seeks to have clients lessen their emotional arousal, make sense of painful experiences through dialectic, and finally

access alternate healthy adaptive emotions (Greenberg, 2002, 2004). Ultimately, forgiveness is found when anger, contempt and pain are transformed (Fredrickson, 1998; Greenberg, 2004; Greenberg et al., 2008) and acceptance begins to flourish in place of retaliation (Malcolm, et al., 2005).

More specifically, within an EFT task-analytic model of forgiveness a client typically begins the process of change by expressing unresolved feelings, including blame, complaints and/or hurt. Following the activation of schematic emotional memories of the unfinished situation, alongside unresolved primary feelings, there is typically an intense expression of anger towards the offender, followed by displays of considerable sadness, fear, grief and/or vulnerability. Change gathers pace when the client comes to express their unmet needs whilst recognising that vulnerability is key to shifting their internal representation of the offender. Only then can feelings of empathy and compassion be expressed as clear signs of an adaptive emotional response. Now that the capacity to forgive is present a new personal narrative can take shape with resolution to follow (Greenberg et al., 1993; Malcolm & Greenberg, 2000).

By contrast, the FPM (Enright, 1991) uses a cognitive-behavioural framework to bring about forgiveness. Specifically, therapy consists of 20 units generalised into four broad phases (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Freedman et al., 2005; Hebl & Enright, 1993; Klatt & Enright, 2011; Knutson et al., 2008). These phases are: (1) uncovering (i.e. admitting that harm has occurred as well as its negative consequences); (2) deciding to forgive (i.e. feeling a need for change and committing to forgiveness as the best strategy with which to reengage life); (3) working (i.e. trying to see the offender from a broader perspective, and to feel compassion for them); and (4) deepening (i.e. finding meaning and purpose in suffering alongside experiencing the benefits of forgiveness) (Knutson et al., 2008).

Not surprisingly, strong emotion is often evident early on in therapy as the client comes to recognise their anger/sadness/anxiety alongside any material loss. Yet it is decisional forgiveness which is critical to the FPM. A client's decision to forgive represents the beginning of change and also a personal awareness that they now have a level of control over the offender. With the commitment that choice brings, and a newfound level of control, the client is able to reframe the offender, ultimately coming to see them as a person. This, in turn, allows empathy and compassion to be brought forth. It is the emergence of empathy that signifies the beginning of the client's

release from unforgiveness. The client is now able to learn to bear, or absorb, their pain and to accept what has happened to them. The final phase of the FPM is often more tranquil. Therapeutic work may even conclude with the client expressing forgiveness to the offender by means of a simple greeting, a comment of concern, a letter, or by talking positively about them to others. Ultimately, forgiveness blossoms when the client finds meaning in suffering and a new purpose in life (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Given the above therapeutic examples we can discern that the key intrapersonal dynamics of forgiveness include: (1) the feeling of strong negative emotion accompanying vulnerability; (2) a cognitive shift; (3) the emergence of empathy towards an offender; (4) adaptive emotional/behavioural responses; and (5) the development of new personal meanings.

The interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness

Although Christian researchers (Walker & Gorsuch, 2004) and practitioners of restorative justice acknowledge the interpersonal nature of harm (Restorative Justice Council, n.d.), therapeutic approaches to forgiveness often focus exclusively on a single client, typically a victim. This is a major limitation of therapeutic practice for harm ripples out to affect both the victim and offender, their support networks, potentially their workplaces and sometimes the community-at-large. As such, forgiveness occurs in an interpersonal, if not social, context which is, at present, largely ignored. Without a developing knowledge of the interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness we may expect theory and practice to stall.

Although only limited evidence exists we can, nevertheless, comment on a few of the key interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness. For instance, it is useful to state up-front that researchers have found that people in happy intimate relationships demonstrate reduced blaming and increased forgiving. Moreover, these people were less prone to believe that their partners were less forgiving than themselves (Friesen et al., 2005). These findings were also generally consistent with the work of Webb et al. (2006), who investigated the relationship between adult attachment style and dispositional forgiveness. Participants with a secure attachment style (i.e., characterized by the maintenance of productive long-term relationships based in trust) demonstrated

significantly higher dispositional forgiveness when compared to participants demonstrating insecure attachment styles.

However, relational dyads are not representative of how people live, for we are all nested within a complex set of social relations extending out from our intimate partners to encompass our communities. As such, we need a way to understand this greater relational complexity if we are to advance our knowledge of forgiveness. Not unfamiliar to family therapists, General Systems Theory (GST) provides such a framework.

In brief, a system can be thought of as a stable set of related elements (e.g. members of a family, employees at a workplace, an ethnic group, or a community) with each system taking its identity from the particular organisation of its elements. Consequently, a system must also have a boundary which controls information exchange with the environment and thus influences system adaptability. Therapeutically, the degree to which a system's boundary is open to information exchange will affect the speed and depth of forgiveness work (Freedman & Zarifkar, 2016) and may be influenced by hope-based strategies given that hope sees beyond the immediate, while also negating threats to promote useful qualities including curiosity (Edwards & Jovanovski, 2016). Yet even more than system adaptability, the most important implication arising from the above description is that a system's elements interact in an organised way to promote the system's purpose and to maintain its integrity (Goldenberg et al., 2017).

Following in-group harm, such as when one person in the group offends another, system integrity can be maintained in four ways: (1) the offender shows remorse and is forgiven; (2) an offender of good standing and/or high status has their actions excused; (3) an offender is shunned (i.e. unforgiveness); or (4) the victim is ostracised. Incidentally, in recent times all four strategies have been found to be used by various religious institutions when seeking to deal with allegations of child sex abuse.

Interestingly, the strategy a system applies to reassert its integrity following an act of in-group harm appears to depend not on the victim, but on the offender. Moreover, members of the system appear concerned to appraise only two variables: threat and relationship. For example, Branscombe et al. (1993) linked threat to social identity in the context of US undergraduates, the implication being that if an in-group offender posed a great enough threat to group cohesion then forgiveness was unlikely.

Alternatively, Takada and Ohbuchi (2004) found that within a Japanese cohort, people were more likely to forgive an in-group offender if they were relationally close. Indeed multiple motives to forgive a relationally close offender (e.g. altruistic, ego-centric and normative) were apparent. Finally, and consistent with both Branscombe et al. (1993) and Takada and Ohbuchi (2004), similar threat to cohesion and relational reasons were also identified in the Moluccan ethnic community as to why forgiveness may, or may not, be offered to members following the breaking of a marriage taboo (Huwaë & Schaafsma, 2018). Again, unforgiveness resulted when social identity was threatened. However, people tended to forgive an in-group offender out of relational motives. Taken together, GST places emphasis on system integrity. Usefully, this perspective is also consistent with the work of Hook et al. (2009) who investigated social harmony and forgiveness. What is perhaps disorientating for practitioners who seek to bring about forgiveness is the importance of the offender in the eyes of their community as compared to the justice owed to the victim.

While GST highlights the objective of system integrity, the related field of Cybernetics describes how this is achieved (Goldenberg et al., 2017). Integrity is brought about through system stabilisation (i.e. homeostasis). In turn, homeostasis is brought about by social rules/norms which, when enacted, produce feedback loops within the system.

To demonstrate this let us exclude three of the four system-wide strategies described above to deal with in-group harm. In doing so, let us focus our attention only on how forgiveness is brought about. While an act of interpersonal harm amongst in-group members disrupts homeostasis, two interdependent forgiveness-related feedback loops appear to be initiated sequentially to re-establish system homeostasis. In the simplest form, an offender is punished which initiates a negative feedback loop to quell a victim's hesitancy to forgive. Second, in the act of forgiving a punished offender the victim initiates a positive feedback loop to repair relational bonds and so re-establish system-wide homeostasis (Strelan & van Prooijen, 2013).

Yet systems vary, to some extent, on the rules they use to bring about forgiveness and therefore to re-establish homeostasis. To demonstrate this let us consider forgiveness across the three Abrahamic faiths.

In Judaism, *Torah* considers forgiveness to be a *mitzvot* (i.e. a law or rule; Montgomery, n.d.). But forgiveness occurs according to a precise ritual. For example, the word *salach* is the most commonly used word to describe forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible

and is akin to pardon, but a second word, *kipper*, is also used. Importantly, *kipper* suggests atonement. *Kipper*, when paired with *salach*, also precedes it, thus suggesting a ritual of forgiveness in which atonement for the wrong committed comes before the pardon offered (Silverberg, n.d.).

Interestingly, Islam allows for proportional revenge to re-establish homeostasis after harm but maintains a parallel, and preferable, pathway which overlooks the wrong committed. For example, “Islam taught a middle path between turning the other cheek and never-ending blood feud, that is, revenge to the extent harm [is] done is allowed but forgiveness is preferred.” (Rye et al., 2000, pp. 31).

As a unique contribution to world culture, it is Christianity which has departed most radically from the notion of punishment and forgiveness. For example, when asked how often one should forgive, Jesus enigmatically set no upper limit (Matt. 18:22). When asked how much a person should forgive, Jesus told the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) whose father forgave all the boy’s indiscretions utterly. Moreover, Jesus extended this limitless forgiveness to all people — not just the “chosen people” of God (Lk 24:47).

Even so, and perhaps forgotten by some, forgiveness is still paired with repentance (Luke 24:47). While Christ has taken our punishment there is still the expectation of remorse (2 Cor. 7:10) and behaviour change (Rom. 12:2; Jas. 2:26), even if these occur following the forgiveness offered. Therefore, a Christian worldview does not so much remove established social norms regarding forgiveness but: (1) inverts their order; and (2) replaces punishing the offender with the expectation of a change of heart. Indeed, Paul persuaded against further punishment in the Corinthian church (2 Cor 2:5-11) extolling forgiveness, encouragement/comfort and love as the way to positive behavior change. He even correctly understood that hefty punishment is counter-productive. From a cybernetic perspective, the effect of this inversion of expected forgiveness norms is to activate a positive feedback loop before a negative feedback loop.

Finally, an important extension of GST is Social Network Theory (SNT). Whilst now using words such as network in place of system, and node to identify a group member, the two theories are in strong correspondence. The value of SNT to the present discussion is two-fold. First, SNT considers a system not as an amorphous mass of elements but as a set of interconnected nodes. In other words, SNT looks

closely at the individual relationships within a system. In doing so it adequately mimics the attachments between people which are jeopardised when harm is done and restored when forgiveness is offered. That SNT implies attachments between people makes it particularly useful when trying to understand psychological phenomena. Second, social network theorists are particularly interested in identifying influential people within a network by looking for highly attached nodes (i.e. in direction, quantity or spread). In this way our attention is shifted from system-wide attributes to consider key people responsible for the creation and/or maintenance of social norms (Arif, 2015; Pupazan, 2011). Importantly, a victim, or offender, may not be one of these influential individuals and so be subject to limited choice or undue pressure to conform. At the extreme, some influential people may even have the power to "crash" a person's social network if conformity is not forthcoming.

Taken together, from a systems/network perspective it is naïve to consider forgiveness to be only about a victim and their autonomy. The system to which a victim belongs will maintain its integrity, appraise an offender's worth, impose rules (i.e. social norms) and use influential members to achieve its outcomes.

Implications and conclusion

In bringing together the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of forgiveness new insights emerge which are valuable for researchers and practitioners alike.

For example, what is forgiveness? From a victim's perspective (i.e. the intrapersonal) forgiveness is a specific response to injustice. This implies both choice and virtue. For a victim, pardon and release embody a multidimensional psychological construct worked-out over time. Yet from the system's/network's perspective (i.e. the interpersonal) forgiveness is not considered in terms of injustice, but as broken attachments disrupting system organisation and ongoing integrity. Forgiveness can therefore be assumed to be one of several mechanisms designed to re-establish system homeostasis following insult. This perspective is amoral and suggests little, if any, choice for individuals in how they respond to harm. Indeed, both the victim and offender are subject to system-wide rules of punishment/revenge/atonement/repentance. Given this, one may even speculate as to whether pardon and release is simply the psychological basis for conformity and self-justification having acquiesced to system-wide demands?

For practitioners, such as psychologists and counsellors, this expanded understanding of forgiveness has significant implications. However, other professionals, including chaplains and local church pastors, also routinely work to bring about forgiveness. Arguably it is these professionals, being both designated representatives of a larger system and responsible to hurting individuals, who must grapple most deeply with how to bring together the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness. To assist, let us keep in mind the following questions. First, do we prize a theology which takes as its focus Christ's salvific mission which is, of course, forgiveness-potent? Second, have we created an ecclesiology (i.e. a church system) able to find new forms of homeostasis and therefore willing to productively engage both hurt and forgiveness? Third, how does liturgy help, or hinder, forgiveness? For example, is pardon and release promoted by a general confession and corporate absolution, or does forgiveness require an act of repentance? Fourth, what is the power of the sacraments, as signs pointing to God's forgiveness of us, to promote forgiveness between people? Indeed we may well consider the sacraments to be powerful spiritual remedies to bring together, or unite, that which is estranged, divided or broken.

Beyond an acknowledgement of the complexity of bringing together the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of forgiveness, it is also necessary to provide some guidance to practitioners on how to work with clients, congregants etc. to facilitate forgiveness. To begin with, it must be understood that a practitioner, of whatever form, and the person seeking their assistance (i.e. client/victim) are members of the same system. However the practitioner is an influential member having education, position, and often title. Reappraising this power differential in light of the interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness, we should ask for whom is the practitioner working? Indeed, some practitioners may not be fully aware of the agenda they serve by the social and professional norms they uphold. Yet practitioners do genuinely seek to work on behalf of those who come to them for help. However, for practitioners to do so effectively requires a cognitive shift. The practitioner needs to deliberately shift from working "for" forgiveness, as a system requirement, to working "with" forgiveness, being an open-handed exploration of client needs. Only now can client autonomy be promoted without conflict of interest. Unfortunately, this important distinction is not apparent in current therapeutic approaches to forgiveness. Cynically, one may even argue that current therapeutic practices are implicitly designed to help clients cope with the forgiveness demands imposed on them by their systems at the expense of their own

autonomy. This somewhat radical position is consistent with the need for clients to express strong negative emotion and the time spent in therapy attempting to reframe the offender, both. of which would appear to be important elements in resolving the cognitive dissonance of self versus system. Moreover, the therapeutic expectation that clients choose to forgive, and demonstrate forgiveness, has the effect of locking them into a system-preferred way of behaving.

In reappraising forgiveness work given the above concerns, several considerations now become apparent. First, there is a distinct need for psycho-education at the commencement of forgiveness work. Unless a client is aware of both the intrapersonal and interpersonal components of forgiveness, they cannot exercise their limited autonomy. In fact, without adequate psycho-education they risk blindly following a social script which may leave them confused, embittered or even unsafe.

Second, in accordance with these newfound learnings, and because the practitioner is now working *with* forgiveness, a fearless exploration can take place. This may reasonably begin with the harm done but, as appropriate, may seek to reframe this in terms of broken attachments. Such a discussion can then be broadened to broken attachments within the client's family of origin and throughout their life, thus providing insight into the traumatising nature of the harm inflicted. In this way, the affective dimension of harm is brought together with the cognitive dimension to create a web of narratives which can then be worked upon. Importantly, these narratives contain key system, cybernetic and social network principles. Bringing these to the fore, including system rules, is critical therapeutic work.

Third, given this new knowledge, the client now has the insight, and therefore the autonomy, to either disengage from their system or reintegrate within it, irrespective of the system-wide strategy imposed. However, both choices carry significant consequences which the client must accept. Therefore, to reappraise forgiveness work is to shift its focus from the cognitive/emotional to the existential.

Now, if a client chooses to leave their system the practitioner has a duty-of-care to help them manage the consequences of self-broken attachments. This may include assistance to identify resources to maintain lifestyle and wellbeing, as well as to consider the client's personal safety given the damaging effects of loneliness. In fact, important clinical work may ultimately be necessary to help the client transition to a new system when ready. It is also following the option of disengagement that

reconciliation work may commence, creating a mutually beneficial interaction between the client and their former system in spite of unforgiveness.

Alternatively, if a client wishes to reengage their system, the practitioner should seek to use the rules and norms of the system to achieve an optimal outcome. Interestingly, this may involve the offender, influential people within the system, as well as system-approved rites and practices (e.g. a public apology) to establish a form of homeostasis which up-holds the client's rights as the victim of an unjust act (Dhami, 2016; Tait, 2018). It is now that therapy begins to blend with restorative justice practices.

a commonsense view of forgiveness poorly represents the complexity inherent in this virtue. Moreover, the willingness of people to forgive often represents a socially conditioned response more than a choice born of personal autonomy. Ultimately, it is the authors' contention that if forgiveness is to be fulsome and cathartic, current therapeutic practices must be adapted. In doing so, forgiveness work needs to shift from focusing on changing a victim's cognitions and emotions to become exploratory, existential, and in sympathy with key features of the system to which they belong. Forgiveness work is therefore not solitary therapeutic work nor victim-centric. Forgiveness is about an offender as much as a victim and the needs of their community.

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Peer Reviewed Articles

Learning from experience: an evaluation of Christian young adult mentoring

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Abstract

What can be learnt from the experiences of those involved in mentoring Christian young adults in Australia? This article reports on research seeking to answer this question. Qualitative methods were employed to identify the type of mentoring that is most effective at developing a mature character, identity and increased intimacy with God. The approach taken was to interview both Christian young adult mentorees and highly experienced mentors to learn from the lived experience on both sides of the mentoring relationship. Both provided insights into the impact mentoring is having on Christian young adults and suggested ways to increase its efficacy.

The data showed that a frequent and formal mentoring type was the most preferred by both young adults and experienced mentors. Program-based mentoring was shown to have significant advantages and disadvantages, the latter of which require careful attention. Benefits of mentoring that were identified include character development,

intimacy with God, growth in faith and skill development. Finally, a broad series of contemporary ministry recommendations to further improve the effect of mentoring is detailed.

Key words

Mentoring, young adults, spiritual formation, Christian

Introduction

The mentoring of young people has a long history (Chiroma, 2015) and a seemingly ubiquitous current practice. With a rising secularism amongst Australian young adults (Powell et al., 2017), mentoring is often suggested as a way of helping Christian young adults maintain their faith. For example, Powell, Pepper and Kerr (2018) note that "Some churches are responding to changing social dynamics by encouraging intergenerational connection, with activities such as grandparents' and grandchildrens' playgroups, or via mentoring programs in local schools."

Although such mentoring has been occurring, it has mostly been done in an ad-hoc fashion with little evaluation or academic review for Christian young adult mentoring in Australia, and the practices, terminology and effect of this tool varies widely. The researchers of this article have been involved in such mentoring through multiple environments, as mentor and mentoree, and as part of mentoring programs and informally. The hope of testing the assumptions and validity of this mentoring, and improve future practice, led to the development of this project. This research attempts to analyse the lived mentoring experience of people on both sides of mentoring relationships: those who have been mentored and mentors with extensive experience. Both groups shared strengths, weaknesses and potential improvements for mentoring programs. Analysis of this data unveils insights about mentoring preferences and recommendations for more effective approaches for contemporary ministry today.

The study itself is small in scale and focus. It looks at mentoring within the Christian faith tradition, at young people aged 18-24, who are mostly based in north-west Sydney, Australia. However, the inferences drawn through this evaluation might be applicable to an extent for mentoring people of other faith traditions, age-brackets and geographical areas.

Although mentoring has been defined in a broad variety of fashions, for the purposes of this research we assume that:

Christian mentoring usually involves two people participating in an intentional, God-seeking and transparent friendship, where the mentor is usually older and always more mature than the mentoree. The intentional friendship fosters conversations about life stories, God moments, skill development and everyday issues that lead the mentoree to grow closer to the Triune God and receive a God-given identity in His Kingdom. Mentoring promotes a safe yet challenging spiritual friendship to identify experiences and environments that will grow, guide, encourage, support and challenge the mentoree to become more Christlike in all areas of their life and character (Brailey and Parker, 2020, 112).

Situating the Research

Although mentoring can occur between peers, or in a group setting with an experienced mentor guiding multiple mentorees, it is typically a one-on-one relationship with one older mentor guiding, developing and supporting a younger believer who is known as the mentoree or mentee. Such mentoring is widely understood, inside and outside of Christian settings, to have significant merit. A recent survey by Olivet Nazarene University (2019) of 3,000 American workers showed that an overwhelming majority viewed mentors as important: 29% “Very important”, 47% “Important”, 18% “Neutral” and only 6% “Not very important”.

Similarly, the effectiveness of mentoring is well documented (Dubois et al, 2011). Scrine, Reibel and Walker (2012) reviewed the international evidence to show that youth mentoring “can be effective in facilitating a range of positive developments and outcomes for many young people.” More pertinently, for young adults Cramer and Prentice-Dunn (2007) show that effective mentoring can be “a significant factor in healthy development”. For the mentoring explored in this research, that of Christian young adults, Roberto (2012), Powe and Smothers (2015) and Parks (2011) have all established its significance and potential.

The research to date has focused on the outcomes of such mentoring, which have been shown to be positive. This research is not then about the question of efficacy, but attempts to delve within the inner workings of mentoring relationships and discover what aspects are helpful and what can be improved. In particular, examining both

sides of the mentoring relationship should unearth insights that an outcome-focused analysis of the mentorees only would not see.

Methodology

Two types of qualitative research were conducted in this research project to explore the impact of Christian mentoring on young adults: a focus group and a series of in-depth interviews. The focus group targeted young adults that have experienced Christian mentoring and the in-depth interviews were for experienced mentors.

Ethics

The research was conducted after approval was received from the Sydney College of Divinity. All involved signed consent forms and were provided with information sheets. Particular care was given to ensure no harm was caused when covering sensitive topics in the research, for example satisfaction with mentoring, or topics covered in mentoring conversations. No recommendations to seek further support were deemed necessary throughout the field work because no participants showed signs of emotional distress. Similarly, no respondents sought to remove or omit any responses.

Focus Group for Christian Young Adults

A focus group of Christian young adults from Sydney, aged 18-24, that have experienced mentoring was conducted with six participants. The goal was to explore their experiences, perceptions and insights into the impact of mentoring on their Christian faith.

Focus group participants were invited through a range of connections. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary, their responses would be anonymised, and they could review the group transcript from the focus group. Fellow Church attendees and previous or current mentorees of the facilitator were not considered eligible for the focus group to encourage unbiased sharing. Young adult participants in the focus group have been referred to as participants throughout the rest of this article.

In-depth Interviews with Experienced Mentors

A series of five in-depth interviews were also conducted to explore the role and impact of Christian mentoring on young adults. Five interviews, lasting 30-45 minutes, were conducted with mentors who were considered experts in the field of Christian mentoring. All interviewees were volunteers recruited through invitations, again with responses anonymised and interview transcripts made available.

These interviewees all had experience mentoring people aged 18-24 through a range of face to face and digital interactions within Australia and for some internationally. They had all mentored between ten and two hundred people across eight to thirty years, across a wide variety of denominations. Henceforth these will be referred to as interviewees.

Further Research

Many other approaches could have been taken in the research and could fruitfully be done elsewhere. Further research could explore the experiences of mentorees and mentors in other geographic areas, those who have not received mentoring and those who have received mentoring with different, or no, faith traditions. A national study of young adults' experience of mentoring through an online survey could further develop and assess the impact of Christian mentoring on their life and faith. Further research could also assess the benefits of mentoring across character, mission and spirituality indicators. A larger scale assessment of mentoring that utilised an external scale of assessment would provide greater confidence in the qualitative findings revealed in this research.

Data Analysis

Differentiating and Defining Mentoring is Needed to Improve Efficacy

Mentoring overlaps with many of the other empowering processes such as counselling, coaching, supervision, discipleship and pastoral care (Lewis, 33-37, 2009). However, there is a distinct combination of activities that make mentoring unique (Cunningham, 38). Mentoring can include asking questions (Streit, 2002, 805), sharing vulnerably, identifying strengths and, in a Christian setting, promoting the work of God in a person's life (Lewis, 2009, 165).

Mentorees had different expectations of mentoring because of the wide range of activities that they considered part of the mentoring process. Several very different, and sometimes contrasting, activities were discussed. For example, in the research, participants used the word '*mentoring*' for meeting for weekly bible studies with an older, more mature Christian, to describe informal occasional catch-ups with an older family friend and also contractual, yet infrequent 'all of life' discussions. There was confusion because the term '*mentoring*' was used to describe different activities and approaches that can be included in mentoring, which demonstrates the need for a broader agreement on how mentoring is defined.

Discussion Topics

Participants listed the content and topics they most desired to discuss in mentoring. Themes such as Christian growth, relationships, goals, skill development, major life decisions and struggles with sin, including their ability to express healthy sexual desires, were commonly identified. They desired to discuss character growth, career and study choices, mental health issues, processing pain and grief and controversial topics in mentoring. They also sought to discuss pastoral care issues and leadership development.

Interviewees also listed the content and topics that were discussed when mentoring young adults. Themes emerged around relationships, view of God and self, identity, and emotional and inner journey topics such as shame, fear of rejection and perfection. Mentors also discussed the deeper mysteries of faith, exploring vocation, career and decision-making processes with young adults. They also discussed control and faith issues and tried to help people, particularly males, not only to think theologically but also to develop emotionally as Christians.

Comparing these two perspectives on mentoring topics unveils a significant overlap in preferred discussions from both sides of the mentoring relationship. Both wanted to discuss faith issues, decision-making, relationships, vocation and emotional issues. However, whereas the participants stated their interest in skills and leadership, the interviewees wanted to discuss views of God and self, identity and the inner journey. It seems plausible that while the participants sought tangible outcomes, the interviewees focused on the pivotal issues behind the scenes. Nevertheless, the overlap of both lists demonstrates that the intentions of both are quite aligned.

Furthermore, participants' subsequent feedback shows issues from both groups, such as skill development and identity, were successfully explored in the mentoring (Brailey & Parker, 2020).

Mentoring Frequency

When participants thought about their overall satisfaction with receiving Christian mentoring there were a range of satisfaction levels in the group. Many participants were very satisfied with their experiences of mentoring. Two participants were quite unsatisfied with mentoring and explained that they had not experienced intentional or frequent mentoring when they had desired it. They both had felt somewhat let down by their mentors, who had expressed a commitment to mentor them but had not met frequently with them or had time to do any activities with them. The feedback from unsatisfied and satisfied participants highlighted the importance of prioritising and planning well for the mentoring relationships. They both felt that meeting frequently in a committed, formal type of mentoring is the key to influential mentoring with young adults.

The frequency of formal mentoring experienced by participants ranged from weekly for one participant, through to monthly or six-weekly for the rest of the participants. Monthly formal mentoring was the most common frequency that participants experienced, however, the preferred frequency varied between weekly to monthly.

Those who had informal mentors reported that they had been mentored informally over several years. They recounted how they had very infrequent connection with one or two people who still had made a significant impact on their lives. The impact was due to the length of their support and the encouragement, advice and friendship provided over several years.

Initial Experiences

Participants reported that when they first were receiving mentoring, they did not know what was involved in mentoring. Several did not even know that what they were experiencing was called mentoring. They did not understand or know what mentoring types they should pursue to have a satisfying, beneficial relationship. Nor did they understand the processes that are involved to achieve the objectives of mentoring. However, this did not hinder their involvement. Some participants, however, identified

a sense of confusion and felt that the lack of clarity on what is involved in mentoring limited their ability to get the most out of the process. The reason they wanted to get involved in mentoring was because they liked the idea of having someone more mature investing into their life and were open to whatever amorphous benefits might arrive.

Benefits of Mentoring

A range of benefits from receiving mentoring were identified by both participants and interviewees. The benefits included development in social relationships, spiritual formation and skill or spiritual gift development. Given the context of the research was Christian young adults being mentored by Christians, it is unsurprising that the preponderance of feedback was about spiritual formation and similar Christian growth.

The social support received through mentoring was a major benefit regularly mentioned by participants. This reinforced Berinšterová ‘s conclusion that “for the development of spirituality, connectedness with significant adults is needed” (2019). Support in prayer, accountability, encouragement and independent listening were beneficial to the young adults. The development of the young adults’ spiritual formation; their identity, initial experience of spiritual disciplines, growth in faith, and worldview were prominently discussed in a very positive way in the focus group.

Similar benefits of mentoring were also described by interviewees. They identified how the mentoring relationship positively impacted the mentoree in several development areas including faith, gift or skill and identity (Brailey & Parker, 2020). They also noticed benefits such as increased confidence from people believing in them and receiving bigger opportunities.

Participants highlighted the value of non-familiar mentors, affirming Lanker and Issler’s (2010) contention that such relationships beyond the immediate family network help adolescents to flourish. An interviewee explained that young people don’t need rebuking, but noted how beneficial it was for them to have a chance to share about their poor choices without receiving judgement or condemnation which they perceive that their parents would give them. This aspect of mentoring can help to combat the negative ramifications of what Berinšterová (2019) describes as the “Deidealisation of parental figures”.

Evidence for the need of mentors outside the family unit to produce long-term Christian spirituality for adolescents was found through Nuesch-Olver's (2005) analysis of over 500 spiritual biographies from her university students. Nuesch-Olver (2005, 101) reported that 'Without a single exception, students told stories from their own lives that underscored the power of mentoring and accountability in their faith journey'. Biddulph (2013, 31) agrees that such non-familiar mentors were traditionally part of the transition of men into adulthood.

The research behind this article found that mentoring relationships are helping to forge young adult Christians that are sticking with the Christian faith and the church. Participants felt that the experience of being invested into by a passionate, willing mentor helped them grow and develop their own Christian faith. Some indicated that mentoring helped their faith grow because it was a personalised approach to discipleship. Even though sermons and small group discussions had some personal application, participants felt that a unique quality of mentoring was the increased influence of relevant discussion about Christian Scripture and how it could be personally applied to their lives.

One group participant used the sporting metaphor of a coach to describe their approach to receiving mentoring. This mentoree's desire to grow and reach the next level of faith and maturity meant that mentoring was the logical option to receive coaching towards greater maturity and discipleship. Despite not having initiated the relationship, this mentoree had an extremely positive experience of frequent, intentional mentoring that had significantly influenced their Christian growth.

Interviewees indicated that they saw young adults growing in their spiritual formation through mentoring and highlighted the vital importance of mentoring in helping young adults to grow and mature. One interviewee indicated that young adults are still discovering their identity and '*playing dress ups*' and it was confirmed that they require someone to help them throughout this process as their identity becomes solidified (Brailey and Parker,2020).

Another mentor highlighted that mentoring could provide a key development opportunity for young adults desiring to grow in their faith and in leadership. They noted how some of the traditional pathways into Christian discipleship and leadership, such as camping programs, had declined over the recent decades making it harder for

young adults to be real, to get a chance to experience leadership and experience new contexts where they can grow.

Program-based Mentoring Evaluation

All interviewees and participants had been involved in formal programs that also required mentoring outside such programs. The strengths and weakness of such programs were considered and evaluated with both groups offering a range of insights.

The interviewees noted that programs with compulsory mentoring get young adults motivated for mentoring because it is a requirement of the program. Programs were seen by one interviewee as a strong fit for today's young adults who are used to participating in programs.

The structure of mentoring within a larger course has meant that the mentoring is then taken more seriously than otherwise might be the case. An interviewee felt that having the set time frame also meant that it was easier to commit to mentoring because there was a clearly defined time expectation.

Participants in the focus group identified that mentoring became more intentional, goal oriented and positive because of the higher level of accountability in program-based mentoring. The chance to get advice from mentors through regular meetings with a role model and do comprehensive evaluations of their development were very positive elements of program-based mentoring.

On the other hand, interviewees indicated that running formal mentoring programs in the local church context, where young adults were forced into mentoring matches that did not have healthy rapport, led to ineffective and unsustained mentoring relationships. Where programs had been implemented in churches the momentum was lost after two to three months. This could be due to the lack of rapport between mentors and mentorees that resulted from lack of understanding about the mentoring process, types of mentoring that are effective and ways to find a good mentoring match. Often participants struggled to find suitable mentors among they connected with who could facilitate the transformative mentoring process. The relational connection is a key quality of mentoring because vulnerable sharing by both parties is required for mentoring to have a positive influence on young adults.

Several interviewees were cautious of using curriculum in mentoring programs and one felt suspicious of how effective curriculum-based mentoring would be for young adults. Adaptability was described as essential to focus on the current work of God in the individual. The ability to tailor each mentoring session to the individual's circumstances was described by several interviewees as a 'must have' in their approach to mentoring, which they didn't feel would align with a mentoring curriculum.

Young adults acknowledged they sometimes felt uncomfortable being forced to participate in mentoring. They particularly noted the need for the mentor to be willing, passionate and enthusiastic. They were concerned, and often emotionally withdrew, when a mentor was just focussed on making up the required hours needed in a training or leadership development program.

The risk of being partnered with a mentor that didn't align with the mentoree, in terms of values, hobbies, passions and gifts was considered a negative of mentoring in programs. Having to cover rigid content, particularly with someone that they found hard to connect with, was also seen as a negative element.

The lack of clarity around mentoring program goals, processes, expectations and outcomes was identified as a key issue in the focus group, and one participant admitted that due to this confusion they had nearly completed their whole course before they started to appreciate the mentoring they were receiving.

Program-based mentoring can be used very well to facilitate and initiate a mentoring relationship for young adults (Campolongo, 69). The interviewees' reservations about curriculum-based programs were somewhat serious and the forcing of mentoring relationships as a requirement of course or program were found to have both a positive and a negative element.

From this research, a key observation is that programs with clear expectations and quality training that facilitate adaptive styles of mentoring which can be tailored to the individual's needs are most likely to be successful for young adults.

Four Factors for Mentoring Efficacy

The research revealed four key factors that determine how effective the relationship will be at producing the objectives of mentoring: frequency, formality, length and the

number of mentorees in a mentoring relationship. The presence or absence of these factors can significantly alter the experience and either enhance or hinder the processes that guide and support mentorees towards maturity.

The range of mentoring experiences that come under the umbrella term of mentoring have been classified by these four key factors during the analysis phase to produce eight segments or types of mentoring. Colloquial labels describing each segment have been developed for ease of discussion in exploring the unique strengths of each mentoring type of relationship.

Frequency Vs Formality

Low frequency to high frequency		
	Faithful Friends: Willing and sustained support that is generous but unstructured.	**Regular Realists:** Intentional and regular guidance that maintains strong connection through structured accountability.
	Casual Connectors: Special but sporadic nurturing that provides a short burst of intimacy, insight and understanding.	**Stable Saints:** Infrequent yet all-encompassing sessions cover relationships, self-regulation and ministry convergence.

Low formality to high formality

Table descriptions: frequency vs formality

The above table highlights the strengths of types of mentoring based on their frequency and formality and the words describe the relationship between the mentor and the mentoree. frequency refers to how often participants connect. Low frequency often meant quarterly to yearly. High frequency often referred to monthly, even up to weekly for one participant.

Formality refers to the degree of structure in the relationship, which may even include written contracts that outline the mentoring objectives, approach and content that would be covered. Low formality meant people had not explicitly defined the objectives or content that would be covered and was more common for peer mentoring or family relationships with mentor-type figures. Highly formalised mentoring relationships were often more program or training-based among young adult participants. Several interviewees have private practices offering highly formal mentoring to Christian leaders, missionaries or disciples that are motivated to seek mentoring.

Size of group vs Length of relationship

One on one to a small group size	Short term relationship to long term relationship
	Temporary Tribes: A shared experience of vulnerability and temporary community often experienced through camps or courses.
	Community of Comrades: A strong team of unique individuals is created on shared values and is strengthened by years of authentic fellowship.
	Brief Barnabas: Short but significant friendships that become transformative quickly, yet finish fast.
	Legacy Leader: Lifelong influencers build autonomy and accountability into seasoned believers' lives.

Table description: number of mentorees vs length of relationship

The above table explores the type of mentoring by comparing the number of mentorees and the length of the mentoring relationship. The descriptions highlight the influence, experience and environment the mentor creates in the mentoring relationship for the mentoree.

The group size in mentoring relationships can vary from one-on-one right up to group mentoring experiences with eight to ten mentorees in programs or courses that utilise group mentoring. One on one mentoring was the most commonly described approach, but opportunity exists to develop group mentoring for young adults.

The length of the relationship between mentor and mentoree varies from several sessions of a few months right through to long term mentoring relationships that last longer than a decade. The labels defined above were not used in the focus group or interviews as they were developed through the data analysis stage.

Although participants indicated they prefer a variety of mentoring types, the majority preferred the *Regular Realist* mentoring type. They indicated that frequency and accountability were key qualities of an intentional mentoring relationship that led to the best experience which helped them get the most out of mentoring. A few liked the *Casual Connector* and some participants had had positive experiences of *Faithful Friends* and *Casual Connectors,* but this was preferred by only one participant.

The experience of a few participants with peer mentoring in a *Temporary Tribe* and *Community of Comrades* model was very good and enjoyed by those who had been involved in such groups. Several who had not experienced group mentoring noted that such a communal environment was desirable. The *Community of Comrades* was identified as a key type of mentoring to promote that is resource-efficient for the mentor and socially rich for participants. One experienced trainer runs a ‘quad’ with four older participants outside the young adult age bracket and noted that group mentoring is having a very positive impact on the participants due to the authentic sharing and deep friendships occurring in the group. Rymaerz suggests that such groups can be helpful for young adults to process their religious questions and various trials. (Rymarz, 2009, 254)

Most interviewees described the frequent, formal mentoring labelled *Regular Realist* or *Stable Saints* as their preferred type of mentoring. They expected that young adults would not often desire this type of mentoring initially, but several interviewees acknowledged that they steer their mentorees towards it because they find it is the most effective type of mentoring. However, some interviewees preferred a more informal approach with young adults like the *Casual Connector* or *Faithful Friend*. The interviewees that preferred more informal approaches were often younger and had mentored fewer people, however they did have more current experience with mentoring young adults.

Frequency was discussed with interviewees who preferred monthly or six-weekly sessions with young adult mentorees. The factors that determined how often the mentoring occurred were the mentorees’ reasons for seeking mentoring and their

ability to self-regulate. When a mentoree was motivated by a major decision, a life crisis or if they felt out of their depth, then one mentor indicated they would usually meet more frequently with their young adult mentoree to assist during this opportune time.

Many interviewees revealed that, even when young adults ask for mentoring due to a crisis or major decision, they still don't know what they are looking for or what would be the best process. A *Faithful Friend*, or *Casual Connector* would be helpful as a short-term strategy on some occasions but the overwhelming majority of young adults and interviewees felt that formal, frequent mentoring that is encouraging longer-term mentoring relationships should be encouraged. The *Regular Realist* with a *Community of Comrades* or *Legacy Leader* will be the most effective type of mentoring that helps develop and grow young adults.

Almost all participants in the research felt strongly that short term approaches like the *Brief Buddy* were not effective in helping a mentoree grow and reach their full development. This highlights the confusion around mentoring as a process and the lack of understanding about what types of mentoring are suitable for different occasions and most effective overall for young adults. One interviewee was visibly moved when describing the joy of mentoring a young boy aged 12 right through until the age of 24.

The *Legacy Leader* approach of long-term mentoring should be further promoted and celebrated to create awareness of the impact this has for the mentoree and the mentor, according to participants and interviewees.

The use of group mentoring was also discussed positively by several interviewees. Group mentoring where the interviewee had three or four mentorees in a 'quad' was an effective use of time for the mentor. More importantly, though, it had a greater sense of community and social benefit than just one-on-one mentoring. These function as a form of "plausibility structures" (Rymarz, 2009, 251) to legitimise the spiritual journeys of the young adults. *Community Comrades* should also be recommended and further explored by experienced mentors according to many of the interviewees? It is a resource efficient approach for the mentor that is socially rich for all participants. Group mentoring would be better suited for mentors that have experience mentoring at least several individuals before taking the initiative to gather mentorees together in a group mentoring relationship.

Suggestions for improvement

Use Clearly Defined Terms to Explain the Mentoring Process

There is an urgent need to elevate the level of discussion about mentoring in churches and in programs and courses that have a mentoring component. The process of mentoring needs to be demystified through succinct explanations of the processes, preferred types and descriptions of the types of mentoring that have the most impact on young adults. Creative labels like *Regular Realist* and *Community of Comrades* could help to give insight and understanding to the mentoring processes.

It would be very beneficial to help prospective mentors and mentorees in churches new to mentoring to understand what is involved in mentoring before commencing a new relationship. They would need to understand the commitment required and gain clear insights into how the process of mentoring works and what each party is responsible for in the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring Resources Must Provide Clarity

There is an opportunity to develop mentoring resources that clarify the mentoring process for mentoring young adults. Resources could help describe the structure and support provided through mentoring, help people find mentoring matches that work and identify the types of mentoring that are most beneficial and satisfying. Tools for evaluating the impact of mentoring could assist in the assessment of the effectiveness of mentoring and provide feedback to further increase the efficacy of mentoring.

Resources on mentoring for young adults could include short videos or articles to explain expectations, roles, commitments, content, frequency, goals, qualities to maximise effectiveness, evaluation and ways to wrap up a mentoring relationship.

At the start of courses that use mentoring, short videos or articles outlining each of these stages could be beneficial for both mentors and mentorees. The videos would help both parties to see and understand the key descriptions that outline what mentoring entails. Then videos and resources could be refined in an ongoing way to continue to promote awareness of mentoring and address key areas of training such as understanding psychological maturation and spirituality development processes (Berinšterová, 13) for young adults. For less formal mentoring, these resources could still serve as useful tools.

Promote the Benefits of Christian Mentoring

Key messaging needs to champion the cause of mentoring in the local church and in Christian organisations. Mallison (1998, 171) suggested a range of helpful practical ways which would communicate how mentoring is "enriching the church." The benefits of mentoring could be promoted to motivate and recruit more mentors to the movement of raising up the next generation of Christian believers. Interviewees felt that it was important for prospective mentors to recognise their wealth of life experience, wisdom and knowledge that could be used to support young adults. Then they would realise that this was far more important to the younger generations than their limited understanding of social media and the latest trends in technology. Further advocacy for mentoring in professional development in ministry or Christian business environments could further increase the take up of mentoring by young adults. Similarly, the value of supporting ongoing discipleship through mentoring needs to be strategically incorporated into church culture, leadership and general praxis.

Develop Best Practices for Finding a Mentoring Match

One example of how to improve the match of mentors and mentorees was provided from a mentor. Rather than waiting endlessly for a young adult to initiate a relationship, a potential mentor could ask to meet for coffee to discuss what is happening in their lives. If that works well, then that initial discussion can then lead to a more regular mentoring relationship. Both mentors and mentorees could utilise this approach to finding a good mentoring match.

Deploy Volunteer Mentors in the Church Context

Churches have prospective talent pools of older mature believers, and often have fewer younger generations that may need mentoring. Training mentors and creating a culture of mentoring in churches is an imperative. Lanker (2010) explains that mentoring is a logical consequence of Churches seeing themselves as a family, particular in light of Paul's instructions in Titus 2:1-8. However, Lewis (2011, 3) wisely warns against mentors having a position of authority over a the mentoree, which should restrict some options for mentors within a congregation. Positive examples of mentoring by volunteers could be shared in a way that create awareness and invoke passion for mentoring among members, rather than just expecting busy ministers to mentor young adults.

Prioritise Relationship over Performance

Interviewees strongly felt that the church has an opportunity to cause a revolution by placing significant emphasis on mentoring as an element of becoming a disciple-making movement. One interviewee felt the church needed to do less in order to do more mentoring of young adults.

The interviewee felt that giving young adults the space to spiritually form was important, rather than them being overburdened during their formative years. Instead of growth becoming stunted or mutated under a performance dominated culture they felt that mentoring in a more nurturing, uplifting church would be a significant improvement.

The shift from viewing young adults as hired hands, to supporting their Christian growth through relational emphasis would be highly valued by young adults. Mentors need to facilitate the mentoree's deeper journey with God, discern their identity (Brailey and Parker, 2020) and strengthen their character growth to guide the young adult towards a lifetime of ministry from a place of maturity and inner security in God.

Prioritise the Mentoree and Build Trust

Mentors need to take initiative and reach out to invite potential mentorees into the mentoring process. They need to build trust early and occasionally spend the relational credit earned slowly, by correcting or challenging the mentoree. Mallison (1998, 137) recognised that "mentoring is for those who are able and prepared to give it the time and effort it requires." Mentors will need to show patience through some slow growth stages but keep mentorees accountable to goals and a high standard of living. They need to listen graciously in a non-judgemental manner and mentor with passion, prioritising the mentoring relationship and keeping a vision of what it can achieve.

Offer Accountability and Vulnerability to Mentorees

Young adults suggested mentors provide them with a regular 'reality check'. Despite not liking accountability and the tension of conflict, participants acknowledged their need for accountability, encouragement and challenge by someone living with integrity and passion. They want honesty from the mentor. For example, they even want to know when the mentor is not feeling God at work in their life. They desire

deep listening that empathises and is gracious with their sins yet is focused on God's work in their lives. They are particularly interested in identifying growth opportunities. Participants largely prefer frequent and formal mentoring that includes prayer support and quality conversations. They also want to do activities with mentors rather than just sitting and talking together.

Experienced Mentors Can Try Group Mentoring

Mentors could consider using group mentoring for young adults like the 'quad' idea mentioned by one experienced trainer. Group mentoring could be more time efficient and require fewer mentors, with the additional benefit of building greater community and commitment (Rymarz, 2009, 255) among participants. The influence could be greater through group mentoring but the risk is also greater. Mentorees may perceive this as a lower level of attention and intentionality and be less vulnerable than with only two people present. However, done well, for those open to this approach, the vulnerability, wisdom and attention of others can help each mentoree to potentially thrive in this environment. This approach should only be attempted after mentors have mentored young adults individually.

Approach Initiating New Mentoring Programs Cautiously

While younger generations may be more program-oriented than ever, starting new mentoring programs should be cautiously considered as the culture required for a successful program is vital. The values, actions and language of a mentoring culture in a church, course or context would be more important to promote than just trying to launch a new program. All too often Christian mentoring programs are established without any clear training or orientation (Yoder, 100). A clearly described program of Christian mentoring that links suitably trained mentors who prioritise, love and value young adults could be commenced as a small pilot. The impact of mentoring, however, does not need to be limited to a program, but needs to be unlocked as a culture in the church and ignited across all the generations to support the development of young adults as Christians.

Conclusion

What, then, does examining the experiences of people on both sides of the mentoring relationship reveal? What are the implications for contemporary ministry? Firstly, these

nurturing, intentional relationships seem to have a positive impact on Christian young adults in Australia, helping them deepen their intimacy with God, discern their God-given identity, and develop Christ-like character.

Secondly, a challenge in mentoring programs was the difficulty of finding a good mentoring match. Interviewees suggested the best practice is to start as a *Casual Connector* and then after a few sessions, shift to *Regular Realist* if both parties want to progress the mentoring relationship. The mentor and the mentoree can both initiate a mentoring relationship and both mentor and mentoree should be encouraged to reach out to start a new mentoring relationship. Some interviewees suggested that the mentor, as the 'mature' one of the relationship, should take the initiative to reach out to the mentoree. However, pragmatically, more mentoring relationships will commence if both parties are seeking to initiate relationships. Crucially, the trial period as *Casual Connectors* should help to avoid dysfunctional mentoring relationships.

Thirdly, the frequent, formal type of mentoring described as *Regular Realists* was the most preferred type of mentoring and seen as the most beneficial by both mentors and young adults alike. The importance of intentional investment into the young adult through regular sessions was emphasised by young adults and led to the most satisfying mentoring relationships for them. Mentoring that is patient, yet holds them accountable, will be the most beneficial through formalised and frequent mentoring sessions. Young adults recognised that this mentoring was beneficial in helping them deepen their love for God, understand their identity and work on their character.

Fourthly, training and resources are crucial. Although passion and enthusiasm are beneficial, without clarification of expectations, patience for the long journey of relationship, awareness of the various styles of mentoring and the development of appropriate skills, well-meaning mentors may do more harm than good. Similarly, clear resources need to outline the expectations involved in different types of mentoring, to highlight the *Regular Realist* and *Community Comrades* as the most beneficial and suitable types of mentoring for young adults. There is an opportunity to showcase the *Legacy Leader*, *Community of Comrades* and Regular Realist through positive stories of mentoring. These resources would celebrate the most effective types of mentoring and attract young adults and potential mentors to the type of mentoring that will most benefit their spiritual formation.

Mentoring provides the support, challenge and accountability young adults need to develop their faith, identity and character through a regular connection with a more mature believer. Mentoring brings a sense of hope to the Australian church because it demonstrates an effective approach to developing young believers and this research has provided clear pathways, strategic insights and key recommendations to increase the number of mentoring relationships between Christian young adults and mature believers. Finally, although this research has been focused on young adult Christian mentoring, many of the conclusions would remain pertinent to mentoring people of other ages and faith backgrounds.

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Peer Reviewed Articles

Tertiary servant leader development in Aotearoa-New Zealand

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Abstract

Numerous courses have sought to develop servant leaders, but few have focused on servant leadership within a New Zealand tertiary education context. This article explores how servant leaders were developed in a course in Aotearoa-New Zealand using the Sendjaya, Sarros and Santora (2008) dimensions of servant leadership. The article also considers how Māori education concepts may support servant leader development in a New Zealand context. Results suggest most learners developed in some servant leadership dimensions with development influenced by experiential learning beyond the classroom. Further post-course and quantitative research is recommended to expand these findings by measuring the extent of servant leader development.

1. Introduction

Servant leadership was first proposed by Robert Greenleaf as a remedy to poor institutional leadership - including that in the church. Greenleaf drew on Christian leadership ideals to argue that servant leaders must create followers who are “healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants” (1970, p. 6). Though his concept was a good litmus test of servant leadership, Greenleaf did not adequately define servant leadership or provide a good measure to identify servant leaders. Eva et al. (2018) since offered the sine qua non of servant leadership as being “an (1) other-oriented approach to leadership (2)

manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community". This captures the essence of servant leadership, emphasising Greenleaf's service above personal needs and the influence of servant leaders on others.

In the decades since, academic interest in this concept has proliferated with one recent literature review identifying 270 articles in the period between 1998 and 2018 (Eva et al., 2018). Growing interest in servant leadership by academics is not unmerited as servant leadership has been associated with around 60 of Fortune Magazine's top 100 companies to work for (Lichtenwalner, 2010), including six of the top ten. Furthermore, servant leadership was found to be conceptually distinct from other leadership theories with positive impacts in behavioural, performance, leader-related and attitudinal outcomes (Eva et al., 2018). Servant leadership has also been linked with Christian leadership, ministry and theology (Foster, 2014; Russell, 2003), though Niewold (2006) argued servant and Christian leadership are not synonymous and servant leadership presents an incomplete picture of the leadership of Christ.

Despite the growth in academic literature on servant leadership, there have been few studies exploring the development of servant leaders in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Section two analyses servant leader development literature and the unique context of tertiary education in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Section three discusses the design and development of a servant leader course derived from the Servant Leadership Behaviour Survey (SLBS) dimensions and incorporating Māori education concepts. Section four reviews how servant leader development occurred with support from Māori education concepts and in the six dimensions of the SLBS. Sections five and six discuss results and the study limitations and conclusions.

2. Servant leader development

Despite growing interest in servant leadership, there is no unanimity about the process for developing servant leaders. Greenleaf believed it to be a philosophy that developed and emerged through personal reflection (Parris et al., 2013) that could last a lifetime (Grunwell, 2015) rather than a "scholarly treatise or a how-to-do-it manual" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 49). Furthermore, Sipe and Frick (2009) warned against reducing it to a methodology – suggesting servant leader development may not easily translate

to formal tertiary education. Yet, numerous studies have explored servant leadership development in tertiary education. Of these, the courses evaluated by Cress et al. (2001), Marshall (2008), Anderson (2009), Bommarito (2012), Noll (2012), Rohm (2013) and Meinecke (2014) have shown some degree of successful servant leader development. Griffin (2012) and Ashley (2016) also found servant leader development could occur within church or ministry contexts. However, all this research is characterised by small sample sizes and situated in the United States. Cyril (2006) studied servant leader development in Aotearoa-New Zealand within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – documenting servant leader development in both Aotearoa-New Zealand and ministry contexts. Cyril (2006) also incorporated Māori concepts in her analogy of servant leader development as like a growing tree. This present research sought to further explore servant leader development in an Aotearoa-New Zealand context considering the recent developments in the servant leader field.

3. Development of The Servant as Leader course

The 'College' where this study occurred was a New Zealand-based international college offering programs in business, management, ministry, teacher-training, language, technology and digital media. Despite being owned by a church, the College sought to serve a religiously and ethnically diverse student and staff body. Senior management sought to reflect the Christian and New Zealand heritage by integrating principles from servant leadership and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*[1] in *The Servant as Leader* course.

Servant Leadership Behavioural Survey (SLBS)

In line with the College's Christian heritage, the SLBS was used as the servant leadership framework as it included the dimension 'transcendental spirituality'. The SLBS was developed as a servant leadership measure by Sendjaya, Sarros and Santora (2008) and has since been rigorously tested and compared well against other servant leadership measures and frameworks (Eva et al., 2018). Other servant leadership dimensions in the SLBS framework are voluntary subordination, transforming influence, covenantal relationships, responsible morality and authentic self;

[1] The Treaty of Waitangi is the bilateral partnership between Māori chiefs and the British Crown and is widely recognised as the founding document of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

encompassing moral, personal, emotional, relational, conceptual and spiritual development (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Research found the SLBS was Research by Eva (2009) and later with Sendjaya (2013) in secondary Australian schools recommended strategies for developing servant leaders using the SLBS dimensions and prioritised the importance of individual dimensions in servant leader development. This present study applied the SLBS to servant leader development in a new context – namely within Aotearoa-New Zealand and in tertiary education – to understand how servant leaders developed in all the SLBS dimensions.

Teaching and learning concepts: A Māori worldview

Since the 1980's, there has been growing recognition within New Zealand society and government of the need to incorporate Māori culture in tertiary education (Pihama et al., 2004). This recognition is based in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and the more recent Education Act (Education Act, 1989). Approaches to incorporate Māori culture in tertiary education have ranged from establishing *wānanga* (Māori tertiary institutes) to incorporating Māori standards and requirements within tertiary qualifications. As the College targeted an international student body not eligible to study in a *wānanga* and without *te reo Māori* (Māori language), learners had limited opportunities to engage with Māori culture in a formal education setting.

The alternate option was to incorporate Māori concepts in the classroom. A central theme that emerged in the related literature review was the importance of *āko*; the educative process of creating, conceptualising, transmitting and articulating Māori knowledge (Pihama et al., 2004). *Āko* translates to both teaching and learning – pointing to a communal and reciprocal learning informed by evidence, experience and reflection. *Āko* requires that in the learning community, each person (both teachers and students) should contribute to the learning and development of others (Keown et al., 2005) - positioning the teacher as a knowledge facilitator and community builder. Though *āko*, in its fullest extent, is entwined in the Māori lived experience and worldview (Pere, 1994), principles of *āko* were applied through collaborative and reciprocal learning in this course in that each learner contributed to class discussions and informed the learning of others. From this perspective, application of *āko* as a learning concept complemented the servant leadership principles of listening, building community and having a commitment to the growth of others (Spears, 1995).

Another recurring theme in literature on Māori education was the importance of the whakapapa. A whakapapa is the "genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time" (Barlow, 2016, p. 173). By reciting their whakapapa, Māori learners culturally locate themselves within Māori society and the Māori worldview. Closely linked with the whakapapa is the waiata (song), pūrākau (stories) and whaikōrero (proverbs) which draw from personal connections, relationships and experiences shared to co-create knowledge and form the basis of the adult learner worldview (Pihama et al., 2004). The course introduced learners to the concept of a whakapapa and incorporated a Māori perspective in each lesson through a relevant waiata, pūrākau and whaikōrero. These components were facilitated by a Māori academic staff member or through a Māori learner who joined late in the course.

Participant acceptance and course approval

The course was advertised to College postgraduate management students as an extra-curricular course without credit or academic recognition. Learners were asked to commit to a weekly face-to-face lesson lasting two-hours supplemented by online delivery where learners undertook self-study, reflection and preparation of a servant leadership framework. Due to limited interest from students, four College staff who expressed interest in *The Servant as Leader* course were also accepted.

The final course design was reviewed through two panels – one focused on knowledge of Māori culture and the other on servant leadership. These panels were composed of recognised experts in their field from the Auckland region (for the Māori panel) and Australia (for the servant leadership panel). Both panels were given a draft literature review and proposed course design for review and asked to critique the course design. Recommendations were incorporated into the course design including that the course was voluntary and not recognised in any College qualification.

Evidence collection and analysis

The evidence collected was qualitative with the principal evidence being from semi-structured interviews undertaken at the course beginning, middle and end. This was further supported by learner reflections, class discussions, learner presentations and a focus group with learners who undertook a related service project. Evidence was coded, categorised, compared and tagged based on the SLBS dimensions and

thematically as key ideas emerged. The SLBS was not included as evidence in the study.

4. Outcomes from The Servant as Leader course

This section explores how development occurred as related by learners against the six dimensions of the SLBS. Eleven of the twelve learners believed they developed as servant leaders in one or more of the servant leader dimensions by the middle of the course – generally authentic self, covenantal relationship and transcendental spirituality, as these topics were specifically explored. Most learners believed this development continued and further developed in responsible morality, voluntary subordination and transforming influence by the course end. The only learner who did not believe he developed as a servant leader during the course – George, stated he already exhibited all the dimensions of servant leadership, but felt the course helped consolidate his leadership understanding, philosophy, style and techniques and intended to share his thoughts of servant leadership in a memoir.

Development of voluntary subordination

Some learners believed they developed in their voluntary subordination during the course by exploring and reflecting on service and community and social development. Leon and Tina, for example, previously volunteered in community development projects in Brazil and reflected on these past experiences. Leon shared how:

> “[Staff in the community development project previously] said “it will take you a year to understand what has happened…” Six months after, something crossed my mind, and I was like ‘oh - that’s what it is’… Things happen with time - they [do not] happen at the same velocity as events” (28/8/18, 80).

As Leon and Tina shared their experiences with the class, several peers were inspired through reciprocal learning. Jennifer shared how:

> “Tina and Leon inspired me [to volunteer with the Salvation Army] and I’ve been telling my friends. What they did and their passion to help was really amazing” (28/8/18, 207-208).

Jennifer also volunteered with other community and church groups. Other learners created a learner-led community development project. While voluntary subordination developed in learners, it often developed outside of the classroom through guided reflection, community involvement and volunteering.

Development of authentic self

Development of authentic self was evident in most learners as they explored and reflected on concepts of humility, authenticity, accountability and security and vulnerability. Victor found:

> "I've accelerated my growth and wisdom since doing the course… [Previously] I didn't want to be rejected and I didn't want people to know that I knew very little in an area. I didn't want them to know that about me and I didn't want to put myself out there and them decide I didn't know much at all" (3/9/18, 48).

Frank also shared how the experience of living and studying in Aotearoa-New Zealand made him reflect on his sense of identity:

> "In my country, I have status. I have [a] car, I go to [certain] places and I'm surrounded by [certain] people. I felt secure" (28/8/18, 40).

As a result, he was challenged to emotionally and mentally:

> "…move outside of my comfort zone. Sometimes people look at you because you have status. I started now from zero and no one knows who you are or where you came from and feeling like someone else" (28/8/18, 40).

Aimee also shared how:

> "Going through the course I became more comfortable with the vulnerability of being a servant. You become effective when people see that you are being real and being vulnerable" (28/8/18, 2).

Development of authentic self occurred through reflection and was often facilitated through past and present experiences that included community service and the challenges of international education.

Development of transforming influence

Most learners sought to develop trusting and empowering relationships in their servant leader development by reflecting on how they could develop others. Although previously struggling to develop trust with her followers, Erika shared how she now is:

> "trying to build a community and have created new values for the team… I have added team spirit, trust, cooperation and curiosity. I am a strong believer that these values are very important and when each member of the team understands it, they can add to [the community]" (28/8/18, 35).

Transforming influence was often contextual to the learner, with learners who were teachers relating servant leadership to a teaching environment. Lauren shared how:

> "I'm talking a lot more [in class] about the 'being' of the teacher and the relationship of the teacher with the student… [I am] creating focus around engagement and trying to minimise the subject" (5/9/18, 44).

Leon also planned to develop others through formal training and Tina was in discussions with New Zealand Police to organise servant leader professional development.

On their own initiative, Aimee and Tina began mentoring others. Aimee mentored a previous work colleague and a classmate, and Tina mentored several young girls in her workplace. Aimee also coached some of her former church small group, finding:

> "they just opened up… It turned out to be a really honest and deep conversation. I guess it's something that I've never had before… What fulfils me is seeing people get out of their shell and maximise their potential. My vision in the long run is to do coaching" (AJ, 6/4/18, 13, 88).

In developing as servant leaders, most learners demonstrated transforming influence although this was often expressed outside the classroom.

Development of covenantal relationship

Most learners noted development in their personal relationships during the course as they explored concepts of acceptance and availability, collaborating with others and

equality. Jennifer found her relationship with her daughter changed as she sought to authentically serve and become more transparent. Victor shared how:

> "being in service helps my family develop this ethic of service because I'm modelling this to them. Even if I have to stay up late or wake up early… or give up on doing things that I like… so that I'm being and modelling selflessness. This has helped me resolve the tension between my family and work" (28/8/18, 14).

Yvette found the course challenged her self-identity as a leader. Previously, she was:

> "put in a position where I had to lead people - that's why I considered myself a leader at the time… [In the] course, [I found] it's not so much having a position but being able to relate to people and being able to lead and influence people" (YM, 28/8/18, 178).

Aimee sought to move towards a coaching career as she became:

> "more confident and comfortable… being vulnerable with other people… in my church or with people I'm coaching. I had this guard before preventing me sharing my real self and exposing my vulnerable side. Now I'm more confident and comfortable exploring deeper relationships because I'm more comfortable opening up myself" (28/8/18, 94).

Several learners also noted how collaboration developed during the course as they undertook a group project in another College course and worked in a team while applying principles of servant leadership.

While most learners believed their relationships developed, the nature of this development differed among different learners. Some learners focused on relationships with family and/or friends while others emphasised their team, workplace or church – suggesting learners perceived servant leadership as a holistic leadership concept not limited to vocational settings or the Christian faith.

Development of transcendental spirituality

Most learners believed they developed spiritually as they reflected on their personal spirituality. For many, this was related with their faith. Rick shared how:

> "with this course, it really increased my spirituality and helping me to understand myself better and improve myself. So, for me to say that, assumes that God really listens and really advises - that's more than just anything - that for me is gospel more than gospel..." (RL, 28/8/18, 199)

Development in some learners connected their faith with a sense of mission. Valerie shared how:

> "I'm more aware now of what is happening [and that] my servant teaching is not just in church but is in everything. I understand I am influencing people more than I thought" (28/8/18, 98).

Though some learners were not religious, they still noted development in their spirituality. Lauren shared how:

> "I think my self-confidence and efficacy have grown hugely since I've... [been a part of] the servant leadership course because it has enabled a lot of discussion and openness and lots of opportunities for awareness and how things are and how things can be. So, I think it's really powerful and being in the class is just magic. It should be bottled" (12/4/18, 40).

As most learners initially identified with a religion (Catholicism, Buddhism, Mormonism or Protestant Christianity), development built on their faith as learners integrated the concepts of servant leadership with their religious context and beliefs.

Development of responsible morality

It was difficult to determine the extent to which responsible morality developed. Learners reflected on their personal moral opinions about issues such as corruption, hypocrisy and exploitation of the poor during the course, but these opinions were consistent with earlier beliefs. The most prominent development was in attitudes towards social justice where Frank and Jennifer began taking 'moral action' by participating in community projects and desiring to volunteer after the course. This research would benefit from follow-up research to determine if this change in moral reasoning led to changes in moral action.

Application of Māori teaching and learning concepts

Some learners believed the incorporation of Māori learning concepts and culture in the form of *whakapapa*, *waiata*, *pūrākau* and *whaikōrero* helped in understanding Māori culture, leadership and their Māori friends. Learners also found the concept of *āko* helped foster trust, openness, and deeper learning - as Lauren (who was a teacher) summarised:

> "[what made the course powerful] was the people and their sharing and their openness. I've never experienced anything quite like that – ever… [Servant leadership and *āko*] brings out that caring and humanity, openness and trust. That trust was secure, safe [and] powerful" (6/9/18, 112-114).

A reason Rick joined the study was to learn about Māori culture to help his personal and professional development. He later synthesised Māori culture with his Filipino culture and personal experiences in what he called the 'Bayan-iwi' framework. For Rick, a servant leader is:

> "a humble and flexible Datu (Filipino leader) to the iwi, a wise rangatira (Māori chief) that holds the Bahay organisation (Filipino community) together as defender and champion of its *Te Whare Tapa Wha* (Māori welfare). The servant leader is, neither absolute nor subordinate but respected" (14/6/18, 411).

Other learners also concluded their ethnic culture was like Māori culture or that Māori and servant leadership were synonymous. Although learners deeper appreciation for the Māori people, this attitude reflects a simplistic and ethno-centric approach that does not appreciate the cultural differences or nuances of Māori culture.

5. Discussion

Results echo earlier findings of Eva (2009) and others, that learners must apply or draw from servant leadership outside the classroom in order for the development to take place. Learner feedback on their development agreed with earlier research that volunteering (Bowen et al., 2009; Cress et al., 2001), service-learning (Marshall, 2008; Stewart, 2012; Yorio & Ye, 2012) or action learning (Robin & Sendjaya, 2019) may result in servant leader development. The findings are also consistent with Greenleaf's assertion that servant leader development is reflective and occurs over time (1977).

However, as development often occurred through experiential learning outside the classroom in concert with other events, it was difficult to delineate what development was the direct result of the teaching. This study illustrated how a cycle of action-reflection learning may support servant leader development when there is a reflective space and theoretical frameworks underpinning the learning that encourage action/practice.

This study was the first to explore reciprocal learning through the Māori concept of *āko* as a philosophy to support servant leader development. This builds on earlier studies that found pedagogical tools emphasising interpersonal relationships such as mentoring and pairing (Ashley, 2016) supported servant leader development. This study also suggests covenantal relationships should be fostered in the classroom through learner-learner relationships and teacher-learner relationships. This may be facilitated through the facilitator being a 'servant teacher' (Hays, 2008) and modelling servant leadership in their personal classroom interactions.

Incorporating Māori learning concepts and culture in the classroom was largely beneficial. While learner awareness of Māori culture increased, care must be given to facilitating a deeper understanding of Māori culture as a unique concept distinct from servant leadership or their familiar culture. The limited development of learners in understanding Māori culture in this course points to a wider need for tertiary institutes with international learners to encourage Māori concepts and culture at a programme level.

Consistent with the earlier findings of Cyril (2006), most learners found their transcendental spirituality developed through their servant leader development. This was true for learners who identified as Mormon, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist and agnostic – a contrast to earlier studies that sought to develop servant leaders in a particular religion or tradition (Ashley, 2016; Cyril, 2006; Griffin, 2012). These results suggest a relationship may exist more broadly between servant leader development and spiritual development – although the nature and strength of this relationship requires further research. While Eva (2009) suggested transcendental spirituality be replaced with a focus on understanding how learners are 'part of a bigger system', these findings suggest that transcendental spirituality – and potentially the sub-dimensions of 'religiousness', can be an important component in servant leader development. Furthermore, where Eva (2009) reported that transcendental spirituality

should not be taught because of differences between denominations and religions, this study found that servant leader development occurred regardless of the participants religious beliefs and these religious differences potentially helped in learners' servant leader development.

6. Limitations and Conclusion

Consideration must be given to the unique context of this study where most learners were international students and had a higher level of religious affiliation than would be expected in other New Zealand classrooms. Furthermore, without quantitative measures for servant leader development through the SLBS – or any other scale – it is difficult to determine the extent of development. Last, the exploration of only 12 learners limits the ability of the study to draw wider conclusions about the nature of servant leader development through this or similar courses.

As evidence grows of the positive outcomes of servant leadership, consideration must be given to how servant leaders can develop. This study explored servant leader development within tertiary education in Aotearoa-New Zealand supported by Māori teaching and learning concepts and found servant leadership dimensions developed in some learners. Findings from *The Servant as Leader* course suggest servant leadership dimensions can develop within the classroom as educators contextualise servant leader development to local cultures and customs.

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Research Notes

Mission field workers and resilience: a pilot study

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(research note)

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Abstract

Mission field workers are vital in the life of the Church. However, they represent a group of individuals who must contend with a variety of stressors, some of which may be of high intensity and/or long duration. It is therefore important for sending organisations to select psychologically resilient people while also promoting resilience amongst current field workers. In this pilot study a cohort of 20 resilient former field workers (8 males & 12 females) were interviewed about their experiences. Each participant had been impacted by at least one significant negative occurrence whilst in the field. In light of the participants' professional context five attributes which may have promoted their resilience were investigated. Interestingly, resilience was

demonstrated in light of impaired social supports. Surprisingly, the personality trait of Agreeableness appeared to be an important factor in maintaining resilience. Attitudinally, participants were described as having high levels of hope. Religiosity, not spirituality, promoted resilience. Finally, the participants were goal-driven. These findings not only extend upon the current literature but provide interesting opportunities for further research and important insights for organisational leaders.

Key words

Mission; resilience; social support; personality; hope; religiosity; goals.

Introduction

Evangelism emerges as a direct consequence of the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19) of which the most iconic form is mission work. Ostensibly, mission work occurs under the auspices of a Not-For-Profit entity often referred to as a sending organisation. Such organisations have a considerable duty-of-care to select, equip and support mission workers. More so for the fact that field work is inherently stressful (Carter 1999; Johnson & Penner 1981; O'Donnell, 1992). Yet some field workers are more psychologically resilient than others (Gonçalves, 2014; Selby, et al., 2009; Selby, et al., 2011). To identify context relevant factors which promote high levels of resilience therefore has significant benefits for sending organisations and field workers alike.

While coping "is what people try to do to overcome negative effects" (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2003, p. 36) resilience is often discussed in terms of adapting well to stressors, or "bouncing back" from adversity (Ayed et al., 2019). Not surprisingly, biological, developmental and experiential factors promote resilience alongside behavioural (e.g. exercise), emotional (e.g. positivity) and cognitive (e.g. flexibility & acceptance) factors (Crane et al., 2019; Luthar & Brown 2007; Southwick et al., 2005).

However, other factors are also likely to contribute to resilience. Within the present context social supports (Selby et al., 2009; Southwick et al., 2005; Sippel et al., 2015) and religiosity or spiritual beliefs (Coperland-Linder, 2006; Francis & Kaldor, 2002; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Le et al., 2019; Park, 2005; Southwick et al., 2005; Maltby et al., 1999) must be considered. Similarly, personality traits, attitude and goal attainment also have relevance. For example, a number of personality researchers

have linked low levels of Neuroticism to resilience alongside high levels of Extraversion and Conscientiousness and, to a lesser extent, high levels of Agreeableness and Openness to experience (Aben et al, 2002; Campbell-Sills et al., 2004; Fayombo, 2010; Ormel et al., 2004). *Prima facie* a hopeful attitude would also be expected to promote resilience. However mixed results have been found meriting further research (Cheavens et al., 2016; Lloyd & Hastings, 2009). Finally, goal attainment contributes to personal wellbeing and therefore likely promotes resilience (Brunstein 1993; Oishi et al., 2009; Sheldon & Elliot 1999; Sheldon et al., 2004).

The importance of the above five resilience-related attributes were investigated in the current pilot study following engagement with a cohort of resilient returned field-workers.

Method

Twenty adult returned field workers (8 males & 12 females; mean age 55 years) participated in this pilot study. All participants had spent >5 years on the mission field. Participants were from a variety of Protestant Christian denominations and had served with a variety of sending organisations. Each participant took part in one semi-structured interview and completed the NEO-PI-R as a measure of personality and the Snyder Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991).

Results

Initially it was important to determine if this cohort of 20 participants was resilient. Between them, the 20 participants recalled 32 significant negative experiences whilst in the field. As such, a number of participants had been impacted by more than one significant negative experience. Of the 32 significant negative experiences reported nine were reported as high intensity, three as medium intensity and 20 as low intensity. Notably, the median duration of all significant negative experiences was 3 years. Yet in spite of ongoing hardship all participants persisted in their work. Moreover, 17 participants rated their mission experience either positively or very positively. Considering these facts holistically the researchers rated this cohort to be resilient.

In spite of resilience social support was impaired for this cohort. Five participants did not have the support of family and/or friends to undertake mission work. When in the

field 24 of the 32 significant negative experiences reported related to inter-personal conflict which often persisted for months or years without resolution. In addition, only 11 participants noted the adequacy of their sending organisation's support in helping them to resolve interpersonal conflict.

According to past findings this resilient cohort should have demonstrated low levels of Neuroticism and high levels of Conscientiousness and Extraversion (Aben et al, 2002; Campbell-Sills et al., 2004; Fayombo, 2010; Ormel et al., 2004). Yet, only four participants demonstrated low or very low scores for Neuroticism while eight participants scored high or very high. As for Extraversion, 10 participants scored very low or low and only one scored in the high to very high range. In addition, nine individuals scored very low or low for Conscientiousness while only two scored either high or very high. With respect to the trait of Openness to experience seven participants demonstrated very low or low scores while six demonstrated high or very high scores. Finally, Agreeableness had no participant score either very low or low, but 15 participants scored high or very high.

Using the Snyder Trait Hope Scale the mean agency score from the 20 participants was 81% and the mean pathway score was 75%. This indicated that the cohort was comprised of "high hope" individuals.

In the context of the present study it was important to establish if participants' faith promoted their resilience. Of the 20 participants only 10 explicitly noted their mission work as a direct calling from God. Nevertheless, all participants undertook regular personal religious practices as well as worked either within a Christian context or held a Christian worldview within their community.

Finally, of the 19 participants who discussed professional and personal goal attainment 12 achieved all goals set. Of the remaining seven participants three suggested that all professional goals had been achieved but that some personal goals had not.

Discussion

Mission field workers represent a unique group when studying resilience given their medium- to long-term immersion in a foreign culture which may not be politically stable, economically affluent, nor welcoming of religious plurality.

Having established that this cohort was psychologically resilient the researchers investigated five context-relevant attributes thought to promote resilience. They were: (1) social support; (2) personality; (3) hope; (4) religiosity/spirituality; and (5) goal attainment.

For this cohort social supports were not optimal. A quarter of all participants did not have the support of family and/or friends to undertake mission work. Three quarters of all significant negative experiences in the field pertained to persistent inter-personal conflict, while more than half of the participants also felt unsupported by their sending organisation when it came to conflict resolution. That resilience was maintained in spite of limited social supports does not negate their importance but does suggest the presence of other compensatory factors.

Although personality traits are considered stable over time we must allow for the possibility that significant negative experiences, endured for months or years, may alter personality. In particular, persistent stress may reasonably increase Neuroticism which likely explains the greater than expected number of participants demonstrating high or very high levels of this trait. What is interesting amongst the findings related to personality is that: (1) only one participant demonstrated high levels of Extraversion which contradicts past findings; (2) only six participants demonstrated high, or very high, levels of Openness to experience in spite of the supposition that this trait would facilitate cross-cultural work; (3) 15 participants scored high or very high in Agreeableness; and (4) nine individuals scored low or very low for Conscientiousness in spite of high levels of goal achievement. To explain the findings for Conscientiousness we must remember that this trait has six facets within the NEO-PI-R of which only one is named Achievement Striving. Yet amongst the findings for personality it is the high level of Agreeableness which stands-out. We speculate that this personality trait is especially important for resilience when social supports are limited, “escape” is not a viable strategy and group cohesion is necessary for goal attainment.

In brief, the current study brings attitude to the fore as opposed to emotion. This is a unique contribution. The authors note that in spite of hardship the cohort was both resilient and had high levels of hope, albeit measured after their return to Australia. This represents a fertile area for future research.

Surprisingly, only 10 participants had an explicit calling to mission work. That 50% did not, and yet the entire cohort was resilient, is a fascinating finding. In explaining this it is useful to note that Coperland-Linder (2006) linked religiosity and resilience which is in accordance with the fact that all participants undertook regular religious practices.

Finally, while 79% of participants achieved all professional goals set it is also worth noting that 63% achieved all professional *and* all personal goals. Not only can we conclude that this cohort was goal-driven but we may reasonably speculate as to whether goal attainment mitigated the worst effects of on-going hardship and therefore contributed to resilience. Again, this is a matter requiring further investigation.

In conclusion, the current pilot study extended upon past findings pertaining to psychological resilience but did so in a context-appropriate way. Although much remains for other researchers it is hoped that the current findings will be of direct benefit to field workers and the organisations who send them abroad to fulfil Christ's Great Commission.

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A selective list of doctoral theses in the areas of ministry and practical theology awarded during 2020.

Australia, New Zealand & the Pacific

Bohr, Mark
The Self-Identification of Generation Y as 'No Religion' in Contemporary Australian Society.
D.Min. – Alphacrucis College, 2020.

Cook, Michelle
On Being a Covenanting and Multicultural Church: Ordinary Theologians in the Uniting Church Explore what it Means to be Church.
Ph.D. – University of Queensland, 2020.

Dick, Helen
The Religious and Spiritual Beliefs of Direct-Care Workers in a Residential Aged Care Facility, with Particular Reference to their Experience of Suffering, Death and Dying in the Workplace: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Project.
Ph.D. – University of Queensland, 2020.

Dujunco, Normandy
Inculturated Faith Formation of New Teachers through Narrative Theology.
D.Th. – University of Divinity, 2020.

Harris, Tania
Hearing God's Voice: Towards a Theology of Pentecostal Revelatory Experience.
Ph.D. – Alphacrucis College, 2020.

Krause, Gary
Seeking the Shalom: A Wholistic Approach to Adventist Urban Mission in the United States Drawing on Ellen White's "Centres of Influence" Concept.
Ph.D. – University of Queensland, 2020.

Lewis, Rowan
Changing Faith: The Experience and Resolution of Disruptive Episodes in the Faith of Christian Emerging Adults.
Ph.D. – University of Divinity, 2020.

Polley, Nathan
Spiritual Development in Aspiring Servant Leaders in an Aotearoa-New Zealand Tertiary Education Context.
D.Min. – Alphacrucis College, 2020.

United Kingdom & Europe

Ummu Kulsoom, Aminath
Employee's Engagement and Job Commitment in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Maldives.
D.B.A – The University of Liverpool, 2020.

Warnock, Helen Jane
The Nature of Youth Ministry in Northern Ireland Through the Eyes of Local Practitioners.
D.Prof. – University of Chester (UK), 2020.

North & South America

Benac, Dustin D.
Adaptive Church: A Practical Theology of Adaptive Work in the Pacific Northwest.
Th.D. – Duke University, 2020.

Fleck, Jessica E.
Team Leadership: Core Competencies in Children's Ministries.
D.Min. – Asbury Theological Seminary, 2020.

Keefe-Perry, L. Callid.
Schooling the Imagination: A Practical Theology of Public Education.
Ph.D. – Boston University, 2020.

Kramer, Rachelle M.
Towards a Holistic Education: Forging Integrative Approaches between Campus Ministers and Theology Faculty at Catholic Universities
D.Min. – Catholic Theological Union, 2020.

Mentzer, Timothy Andrew
Finding Meaning in Organized Religion: A practical Theology for the Church's Mission with Millennials.
D.Min. – Duke University, 2020.

Thomas, Barbara J. P.
Practical Theology for Mentoring Students in the Work of Ministry: Using Alumni to

Equip Future Leaders at Rochester Bible Institute
D.Min. - Northeastern Seminary, 2020.

Tun, Si Thu
Can Christian Make a Difference? A Critical Practical Theology of Peacebuilding in Burma.
Ph.D. – St. Thomas University, 2020.

Book Reviews

book review editor Dr Stephen Parker

Gordon T. Smith, *Wisdom From Babylon: Leadership for the Church in a Secular Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 189 pages.

In *Wisdom from Babylon*, Gordon T. Smith (President and Professor of Systematic and Spiritual Theology at Ambrose University, Calgary, Canada) addresses the question of what it means to prepare leaders for a church in a secular age. Drawing widely from his experiences in ecclesiology, spirituality and theological education, Smith argues that rather than seeing the secular context as a hostile environment from which one must either escape or confront, it provides instead an opportunity for the Church to truly be the Church. That is, the secular turn requires the Church to re-evaluate its understanding of ecclesiology and its mission in the world. In order to explore this theme, Smith divides the book into two parts: The first is an introduction and description of the potential ecclesial responses to the reality of secularisation in the West; the second is an analysis of the required competencies and practices of effective leadership in a secular context. Both parts are essential reading for anyone involved in Christian leadership, and particularly theological education, in Western contexts today.

Part 1 opens with a discussion on the phenomenon of secularisation and summarises four contemporary responses to this present reality: Go Along to Get Along; Monastic Retreat; Fighting the Culture War; and Being a Faithful Presence. Noting that all four responses have strengths and weaknesses, Smith asks the important question of what history and Christian experience can bring to the table. Here he draws from four specific examples, each providing a real illustration of how to respond in such contexts.

The first example, from which the title of the book is drawn, is the wisdom literature from the exilic and post-exilic prophets of Israel. The advice here is to ‘seek the welfare of the city’ (Jer 29:7) and to understand that the exile, for all its horror and destruction, nonetheless lies within the providential plan of God. What, Smith asks, would it look like if we viewed the secularisation of Western society in the same way? Should we fight it, or should instead the Church be asking what God wants us to do in the midst of it? The second example is that of the early Church and here Smith draws

particularly from Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo. Both men navigated a complex political and cultural situation and Smith draws parallels from their approaches to today's world. The third example is that of minority churches who lived, worshipped and ministered in hostile contexts. Drawing on accounts from Christian communities in Japan, Pakistan, Algeria and China, Smith demonstrates that being the Church in a context that is opposed to the message of the gospel is not new, even if the current generation of the Church in certain contexts is feeling it for the first time. The final example is that of the Church in contemporary Europe which went through the secularisation process in the last century. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jacques Ellul and Lesslie Newbigin provide the dialogue partners here. Part 1 concludes with a revisitation of the four approaches to secularisation in the light of the historic examples discussed.

To summarise the argument of Part 1, the secular turn in the West should not be seen as a threat to the Church but rather as an opportunity for the Church to remain faithful to its calling of being an alternative community within that culture. To therefore frame the question of the Church's response in terms of fight or flight is to miss the opportunity that lies before us in its entirety. For this reviewer, the value of Part 1 is found primarily in this exhortation.

Part 2 then deals with the question of 'where to from here'. That is, given a secular Western context for the church, what direction should Church leadership take? Smith points out that this is an important question not only for Church leaders but also for theological educators who are preparing ministers for this context. Two points are highlighted: (a) intentionality on the part of Christian leaders and communities to develop specific competencies to minister within secular environments; and (b) any engagement in the secular context must be done ecumenically.

Smith argues that three specific competencies are necessary for Church leaders and indeed, Christian communities, in a secular age. These are liturgical, catechetical and missional competencies. Liturgical because Christian communities must engage authentically with the risen and ascended Christ. This, says Smith, is what cultivates the 'distinctive identity of what it means to be the people of God' (116). Secondly, the community must be catechetical in that it teaches and learns together what it means to live the authentic and ancient faith. Thirdly, the community must be missional for it should witness to the reign of Christ through both word and deed. One might argue

that these competencies are not specific to a secular context and should be considered the *sine qua non* of any Christian community. And that is the point. Regardless of the context in which the Church finds itself, it must first of all understand who it is and what it is called to be before it can engage in any meaningful way in the world.

This is the real value of what Smith has presented, a reminder that in any context in which it finds itself, the Church has a calling to be the people of God and that its response is not to try and fix the world but rather authentically be who we are meant to be. Hence the call towards the end of the book to foster ecumenical relationships between Christian communities. Not with the aim of removing diversity across Christian communities, but instead working together as a visible witness to the unity of the Church within the world. Here lies the strength of the book, in its reminder that the Church should not be afraid of the secular and indeed, anti-Christian change that is sweeping across the West but rather see it is an opportunity to better demonstrate what the Church actually is – an authentic alternative community that lives together in celebrated diversity under the reign and rule of Christ.

If there is a weakness to the book it lies in its relative brevity. Whilst the chapters are well written they really only introduce important concepts, and the reader is often left wanting further analysis and discussion. Perhaps that is the genius of the work in that it whets the appetite for more. Helpfully, Smith foreshadowed such a desire, and he provides an extensive range of resources at the end of the work, collated into relevant topics to aid the reader in further study. In every generation, Christians must ask the question, ‘how then shall we live’? In *Wisdom from Babylon* Smith answers by offering some clear guidelines for a Church navigating life and ministry within a secular, post-Christendom context.

Peter Laughlin
Academic Dean (Australian College of Ministries).

Graham Joseph Hill, *Holding Up Half the Sky: A Biblical Case for Women Leading and Teaching in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 109 pages.

Graham Hill has ventured into a well-populated academic sphere with his book *Holding up Half the Sky*. In the past two decades evangelical scholars have contributed prolifically to the debate of whether there is a biblical foundation for women leading and teaching in churches. Ironically, while the debate proceeded with much ink spilled by both the complementarian and egalitarian sides, globally, faithful women have continued to preach, teach, lead and minister in churches while others have found their path to ministry blocked.

Hill divides his book into three sections: the context of the debate; the biblical basis for the egalitarian position; and practical application of the stance of biblical equality. In doing this, Hill is to be commended in offering a broader perspective of the issue, one that recognises cultural divides, historical and current perspectives, sociological implications, and the all-important practicality of how we uphold biblical equality in our churches and Christian organisations. Too often, academics have approached the debate as purely an exegetical exercise but have not offered many answers to the questions from women ministers and women called to ministry. These women, and the men in their lives and work, want to know how to make biblical egalitarianism work in their personal and professional lives.

In the short first section “Setting the Scene for Biblical Equality” Hill outlines a range of reasons for the heated and complex nature of the debate. This section is helpful, not just for the insights into the cultural divisions in the church over the issue, but also for the naming and answering of three common false allegations made against biblical egalitarianism. While maintaining his egalitarian stance, Hill is humble in his acknowledgment that evangelicals, who affirm the Bible as their primary authority, can interpret the same texts and reach different conclusions. He calls for tolerance and honouring of those who may disagree. The reader will be impressed by the frequent acknowledgement of the contribution of women historically and currently and for the recognition of allowing women their voice.

The second section deals with the examination of the biblical case for equality and is the longest in the book (64 pages). After a brief discussion of Jesus’ attitude to women and the theology of the Creation narratives, the author shifts to the Pauline writings. The standard exegetical approach to Paul’s writings is outlined clearly before four key background issues are examined: Hellenistic culture, household codes, heresies and biblical issues that influenced Paul’s teachings. Hill asserts Paul viewed ministry as

Spirit-empowered and service-focused and provides a list of women who were in leadership and ministry under Paul's apostleship. The remainder of the section is taken up with the examination of the Pauline difficult texts over which evangelical scholars disagree, the texts any exploration of the debate must address: Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:26-40; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 3:1-13. In addition, Hill offers a theological reflection on the importance of the coming on the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the trinitarian-eternal-subordination issue and ends with a summary of the biblical position.

While Hill does not claim to offer an extensive examination of each text (there have been whole books written on single passages) what he provides is sufficient to make his case to his chosen audience. He also does not claim to "advance anything original" (p 1) but he does draw together recent and important scholarly contributions to support his argument (Giles, Fee, Westfall, Mowczko to name but a few). Hill writes clearly, persuasively and with a strong grasp of the breadth and nuances of the topic.

It is in the third section, Embracing the Practices of Biblical Equality that the added value of this book is found. Hill addresses his first remarks to male leaders, particularly in the Church, challenging them in the areas of sexual abuse, toxic masculinity and domestic violence, asking that the voice of women be taken seriously. He then challenges common hierarchal views of ministry and offers his own well-founded definition of leadership – servantship. Then follows fifteen practical ways to empower and release women leaders – they are sound, sensible and any Christian woman leader would add a hearty amen to each one. It is disappointing to note that because this is written by a male leader it will gain more traction than if a woman had written it.

When I told some women ministers and women leaders that I was reviewing a new book on the biblical case for women leading, the overwhelming response was along the lines of "Another one? Do we need another one?" That was an indication that these women had already grappled with, and been convinced of, the biblical basis for their ministry. The converted, however, are not the intended audience of this book. It is written to convince men and women in local churches that gifted women can and should be leading and teaching in these environments.

If there is a disappointment in the book, it is in the aim not to add anything original to the biblical case. The debate is not over and any new contribution to the understanding of the difficult passages can only add credence to the case for biblical

equality. While the book definitely achieves Hill's aim of providing an "introductory biblical case" for biblical equality it would have been an enhancement to have seen Hill's own fine academic scholarship offering new insights.

This book will be of benefit to people who have not entered into the debate in any depth or have entered, become confused or overwhelmed, and left. Its greatest addition to the debate is a clarion call to practical implementation of the theological stance of biblical equality. It provides enough biblical, contextual and practical input to further the cause for biblical equality in the Church. Recommended for lay leaders, theology students, clergy and any man or woman interested in this vital issue.

Cheryl McCallum
Former Principal Eastern College Australia

Joel McKerrow, *Woven: A Faith for the Dissatisfied* (Sydney: Acorn Press, 2019), 225 pages.

McKerrow's book boasts an impressive array of endorsements, reflective of the profile built by the author over a decade of performance, poetry and advocacy. His latest offering is a blend of memoir, theological reflection, imperative appeal and poetic manifesto, very much "Bildungsroman" in feel. One gets the sense that this book was written to be read aloud—not surprising, coming from McKerrow—and indeed, he narrates the accompanying audiobook with his characteristic modulations of rhythm, providing an immersive experience for readers who prefer to listen.

The text is organised into three sections, titled as metaphors for stages in a dynamic maturation: the Sculpted self, Unravelled self and Woven self. These are suggestive of McKerrow's dialectical journey from unquestioned stability to total destabilisation, and then to a new form of groundedness in faith and selfhood.

Each of these three sections begins with a story that represents metaphorically the book's metanarrative and this is indicative of McKerrow's style; layered imagery is emotively jam-packed into passionate reflections on faith, doubt, hope and growth, crystallised in the author's autobiographical anecdotes. In particular, McKerrow's stories validate the ubiquitous yet enduringly difficult maturation that occurs when one has grown up in a tight-knit and tightly bounded community (for McKerrow, conservative Anglicanism and then charismatic evangelicalism), but then begins to

find the conceptual schemas of these communities insufficient for life's complexities. McKerrow presses readers and their communities to be open to learning from, and being reshaped by, emerging dissonances within stated beliefs; importantly, he urges inclusiveness and supportiveness toward those in the midst of such disjointing experiences.

McKerrow also questions the final usefulness of enduring anger and resentment towards those initial and outgrown community contexts, while not shrinking from confessing his own difficult feelings and acknowledging their place in grief. These themes will connect with anyone struggling to reconcile what they have known with what they are becoming and is a welcome encouragement to graciousness in such seasons. As such, this book may be significant for those in ministry seeking further insight into, or solidarity within, such experiences.

The application of this book for contemporary ministry will go as deeply as allowed; it is not a text that promises neat answers, though McKerrow does find significant moments of resolution through the 'rebuilding' process that occurs after deconstruction. Certainly, the stories and poetry woven throughout the text offer themselves for meaningful liturgical use; they give voice to questions, doubts and sorrows as valid components of communal Christian devotion. Much of McKerrow's push back is directed towards conservative evangelicalism and insular Pentecostalism, and perhaps it is within such contexts McKerrow's story can be most significant, as offering humane solidarity in what can feel like dire situations of destabilisation. McKerrow reminds us that such destabilisation is not terminal, nor even problematic.

Theologically, the book incorporates a wide range of voices, possibly more than McKerrow realises. It engages with crucial theological questions and their philosophical counterparts, particularly as it seeks an integral way of articulating a ground of faith and the nature of faith, beyond pre-critical authoritarian pronouncements. There are hints that McKerrow doesn't yet quite land where he wants to land—but in some ways, this is part of the honesty and realism of the narrative; certainly McKerrow confesses that we are always, at once, 'sculpted', 'unravelled' and 'woven' in different ways, inevitably left with loose ends and dropped stitches. Accepting life's tensions, gaps and remainders is enjoined by McKerrow, and he strives to allow this within himself and to reiterate his acceptance of it within his readers.

It will be excellent to see McKerrow's philosophical capacity consolidate in future works, as he is increasingly able to discern the hued strands in the larger threads of his thought, and to tie these in with wider historical debates and theological developments. McKerrow does reference a variety of sources throughout, and this gives a sense of his being engaged in a wider network of dialogue. Continued consolidation will refine a striking energy that is pressing toward a more inclusive, gentler world.

Sarah Bacaller
Online Teaching Support Officer (Stirling Theological College, University of Divinity).

Robyn Wrigley-Carr, *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* (London: SPCK. 2020), 173 pages.

I was introduced to the writings of Evelyn Underhill some years ago as I was drawn into a search for a more contemplative expression of my faith. Quotes and snippets of her prayers turned up as I sought wisdom from those who had gone before in deepening their prayer life through silence, solitude and retreat. Evelyn became a dearer companion still when I was gifted with her prayers in "Evelyn Underhill's Prayer Book" (also by Robyn Wrigley-Carr). I became curious as I read and began to use these prayers in my own life and ministry. Here was a woman who had spent many years ardently pursuing God, not only through a life of prayer, but also with the assistance and influence of other Christians to whom she looked for guidance. Who and what were these influences? How had she become someone who not only found an intimate relationship with God but whose life also became a deeply encouraging force for so many who knew her?

Robyn Wrigley-Carr's new book *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* reveals the influences on Evelyn's life which enabled her to become not only one of the most widely read writers on mysticism and spiritual practice in the 20th century, but also a much-loved spiritual director and retreat leader. One of the strongest of these influences was her relationship with Baron Friedrich von Hugel. Von Hugel was a Catholic layperson, religious philosopher and Evelyn's spiritual director over a period of four years. Wrigley-Carr paints an intimate portrait of the man of whom Evelyn wrote: "I owe him my whole spiritual life" (p2).

The Baron was a “thinker, prophet, contemplative and father of souls” (p16), a remarkable person whose “passionate sense of God” and “special gift for friendship” (p15) combined to powerfully draw people into life-giving relationship with God. Evelyn’s inner life was profoundly impacted by the way he gently but firmly guided her to seek and trust patiently in God’s initiating and sustaining presence. Encouraging her to balance her intellectual knowledge about God, her experiential and devotional practices and an involvement in the church and Christian tradition, the Baron sought to help Evelyn acquire a deep stillness of soul and intimate connection with God. This would enable her to become “caught up in the embrace of God (p75)” and would lead her to become someone who would herself be a gifted guide and nurturer of souls.

Evelyn’s own life is beautifully detailed in the book. Aside from her friendship with the Baron, other life experiences contributed to her spiritual development. These included her home and education, her marriage, the First World War, her reading of the mystics and her own mystical experiences, her connection with various arms of the church and even her early contact with an occult order. Wrigley-Carr’s description of these reminds us that nothing is wasted by God. At age 32, Evelyn was invited to begin offering spiritual direction to what became a steady stream of directees. This led her to expand her ministry of the care of souls to include leading retreats, which became for her a passion and deep joy. The book opens a window into the way Evelyn guided her directees (strongly influenced by the way she had been directed by the Baron) and led retreats, many at the Retreat House in Pleshey, UK, she loved so well and where her famous prayer books were amazingly discovered by Wrigley-Carr in 2016.

The chapters on Evelyn as spiritual director and retreat leader spoke most deeply to me. At times I felt as though I was being directed by Evelyn herself, if not the Baron through her. As a seeker of intimacy with God, I was reminded that spiritual formation is a slow process - my role is to be patient with God as initiator, responding in humility and child-likeness. Evelyn counselled me to slow my pace in life, to make sure I am resting well, taking regular retreats to deepen my life of prayer, connection and commitment to God. She refreshed me with the truth that prayer is our whole-of-life response to God’s initiative of love. Contemplation and action form a seamless life of prayer in which God is constantly abiding in and with us as our lives are transformed by God’s grace.

As a retreat leader and spiritual director in training, I drank deeply from Evelyn's wisdom as received from the Baron – "caring matters most" (p86). God is the "true spiritual director" (p10). My role is to "simply have confidence in God's work, provide reassurance, encouragement and discernment, and not get in the way" (p97). Quiet listening to the directee and discernment of the Spirit's movement are key to being a conduit for God's action within them. Ultimately, it is my own inner life with God which will have the greatest impact on the atmosphere of a direction session or leadership of a retreat.

This is a book that will guide and encourage those who are involved in the care of souls in a pastoral capacity, as a spiritual director or retreat leader. They will find both Evelyn and Baron Von Hugel to be worthy and wise mentors in the journey towards spiritual growth and effective ministry.

Jenny Ross
Staff Chaplain (International Justice Mission Australia).

Denise Cooper-Clarke and Stephen Hale (eds), *Excellence in Leadership: Essays in Honour of Peter and Merrill Corney* (Sydney: Acorn Press, 2017), 228 pages.

Excellence in Leadership is a volume of essays honouring Peter and Merrill Corney, which was released for Peter's 80th birthday. An Australian Anglican minister, Peter has been associated with St Hillary's Anglican Church in East Kew since the 1960s, from pioneering new forms of youth ministry, to being the Vicar of the parish, to continued engagement following retirement from full time ministry. He similarly played pivotal roles in the establishment of Arrow Leadership Australia, Mustard, Oak Tree and various theological training programs.

The book covers a large range of topics that throw light on Peter's lifetime of ministry. After an opening chapter of biography there are discussions of his writing, preaching, the use of music, art, and drama in ministry, family and youth ministry, and formation of new leaders. Each chapter accounts for Peter's activity and thinking on the topic, and widens the view out to long-term implications. This method offers fascinating glimpses of a varied and innovative ministry, and many challenges and opportunities for those engaged with church leadership in the present.

Reading from a more catholic expression of Anglicanism, there are three strands that stand out as having relevance to the wider Anglican and Christian family.

Peter's ministry at St Hilary's saw pioneering of new pastoral models. In his earlier phase of ministry this centred on youth ministry. The church neighbourhood lent itself well to focussing on this demographic in the 1960s, since it was a well-established suburb with a high concentration of private schools. This took shape in Peter's growing capacity to read the signs of the times and develop forms of worship and evangelism that responded to the new youth culture through discussion and music, grounded in the Jesus Movement. When he came to work in the diocesan Department of Christian Education Peter developed (co-educational!) adventure camps where a more systematic approach to peer-group evangelism developed. In 1973 Peter and Merrill moved their focus to The Master's Workshop, which emerged as part of a wider Christian response to the counterculture and sought to offer practical responses to the needs people felt at the time — counselling services, practical assistance for people living on the street, and a think tank on social and political issues that published papers and offered speakers to address a wide range of topics.

Over his 24-year incumbency at St Hilary's he developed a network model for the parish, based on demographically-focused congregations meeting at different times of the day, and small groups that provided pastoral grounding. With this came the necessity to train and equip people to be effective leaders within the network, and to assemble a large team that could steward worship and common life. Two chapters of this book address these issues. Steve Webster gives a very detailed account of the process and thinking behind Peter's development of the pastoral model, and the ways in which this required him to grow and change as a pastor and community leader. Karl Faase describes his own process of formation as a leader through Peter's mentoring, outlining the theological and personal questions that resonate through his own ministry. These discussions affirm the interweaving of the pastoral and evangelistic strands for fruitful parish ministry.

The place of women in the church was the big issue in Anglicanism during Peter's years of ministry at St Hilary's. The book speaks in many ways about the team ministry between Peter and Merrill, and Merrill's own widely varied forms of ministry. In some ways the book would have been stronger with a chapter or two directly addressing Merrill's own distinctive ministry. Tracey Lauersen's chapter, Women Who

Lead and Preach, explores Peter's cultural formation, his approach to scripture, and explores the ways he fostered and nurtured the gifts and ministries of women in his parish and in the wider denomination in pursuit of a church where 'equality, partnership and mutual respect' (p 79) would be the grounding of Christian ministry.

Lauersen's description of Peter's '"meta-theological" approach' to these issues is very rich account of developing hermeneutics to address complex issues so that a change of mind can be grounded on a full testimony of Biblical witness. Peter's method represents an approach that is still urgently needed in view of the difficulty of properly appreciating and drawing on the gifts of women, along with people marginalised on other grounds, in the Church. We can all learn from him.

Paul Perini's essay, Following on from a Great One, offers some commendable insights into the most important phase of any ministry of leadership, where the pulpit stands vacant while a new leader is sought. In many communities there is an urgency to appoint as swiftly as possible, and Perini speaks to how this can shape the ministry of the successor.

He notes that the wait between Peter's retirement and his own arrival was eight weeks, surely a land-speed record in clergy appointments, and he feels in retrospect that 'a well-planned and significantly longer interregnum would have been helpful for the succession that had to take place.' (p 22) Too often the urgency to appoint trumps the needs of a community to pass through the phases of loss and grief, and reconstruction, in order to be able to welcome and support a new ministry.

This book is a great tribute to Peter Corney's long ministry at St Hilary's. It describes how he remained fresh through his long engagement with one place. Anyone looking for models of flourishing over the long run of leadership in Christian community, and how to do it by calling others to join in the work, will find this a valuable book that will repay careful study.

Kieran Crichton
Victoria Convenor of the Australian Academy of Liturgy and a theological student at Trinity College Theological School, Melbourne.

Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Models of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 208 pages.

Models of Evangelism offers the reader a distilled and synthesised study of eight historical and contemporary modes of evangelism. These approaches include Personal, Small group, Visitation, Liturgical, Church growth, Prophetic, Revival and Media. Beginning with models that require a more personalised approach, and progressing to those with the greatest possible reach, Pope-Levison has selected modes that have an established longevity, a substantive historical record, and a variety of exemplars.

This book is both informative and instructional; born out of Pope-Levison's twenty years of student interaction when teaching Introduction to Evangelism to graduates, and interest as a historian. Subsequently, each chapter includes a biblical analysis, theological reflection, historical survey, and a practical implementation guide. Book-ended by stimulating anecdotes and personal appraisals as to the efficacy of each particular approach, *Models of Evangelism* carries the overall feel of an educational textbook and "how-to" working manual. Her hope for the project is that each distinctive approach may ultimately morph in the mind of the reader such that they will "combust to create a model uniquely suited to each particular context" (p.9).

Two notable strengths include the sheer breadth of evangelistic diversity and Pope-Levison's thoughtful theological reflections. Combined, they helpfully serve to expand the reader's evangelistic vision whilst stimulating contextualised application. For the newly initiated to the Christian faith, Models of Evangelism offers a welcome grounding by which they may evaluate their own conversion experience within a broader historical and ecclesiastical landscape. And for the leader seeking to raise the evangelistic temperature of their local church, it offers a framework by which they may assess the utility of past approaches and the prospect for future projects.

Whilst Pope-Levison works hard to reach beyond her immediate North American purview by including exemplars beyond evangelical Protestantism; the overall weighting and statistical analysis drawn from her immediate cultural context give Models of Evangelism an ethnocentric feel. And although not prohibitive, the outside reader will need to be aware of this cultural lens.

Further, Models of Evangelism does not offer an analysis, per se, of the nature of the gospel. However, that is not the stated aim of Pope-Levison's project. Consequently, the gospel is more presumed rather than appraised. That said, her chapter on prophetic evangelism offers a more thorough-going and useful exposition regarding the gospel of the kingdom. Those readers seeking to find a language and methodology

that speaks into a post-Christian culture will find this section particularly rewarding. Pope-Levison argues that far from shying "away from denouncing individual sins," prophetic evangelists "underscore that the whole gospel demands a denunciation of structural sin, such as racism, sexism, economic exploitation, and a capitulation to structures that serve the status quo" (p.126). Here lies Pope-Levison's most spirited appraisal. Many will resonate with her full-orbed assessment: "The heartbeat of prophetic evangelism is an all-out effort to be holistic in scope" (p.129).

Lastly, Pope-Levison concludes with a pertinent question: "But what makes evangelism good?" (p.181). In response, she draws the reader's attention to five qualities that seem to contribute to the effectiveness of each model. These aspects include hospitality, relationship, integrity, message bearing and church rootedness.

In an age where many Christians are either disquieted by the 'e' word or inclined to practice a self-styled faith in isolation, she contends that the local church must see itself as the evangelist (p.190), one that embodies the message by being grounded in the practice of hospitality, relational proximity and moral integrity. She remarks that only when these dimensions are present, will the church "become a compass for a disoriented world" (p.190).

Beyond a mere synthesis of historical methodologies, Models of Evangelism offers the reader a suite of tools by which they may analyse, assess and enact contextualised forms of evangelism. Whilst the book will not furnish the reader with the gift of evangelism, it will further expand and equip the evangelist or evangelistically minded church to embrace with fresh eyes the call of Jesus Christ to make everyone a disciple of his kingdom.

Troy Arnott
Senior Leader (New Community Ringwood)

Kees de Groot, *The Liquidation of the Church* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 192 pages.

This book addresses the big question of what is happening to religion in the contemporary Western world. While the illustrations in this book are confined to the Netherlands and the major focus of the book is on Catholicism, the ideas and forms of description have much wider applicability throughout the Western world, and beyond. I

was surprised by the extent to which I saw parallels to most of his descriptions in Australia. The book is primarily a sociological analysis of what is happening to the churches and will be of great interest to academics and practitioners who are trying to make sense of the present church decline and the emergence of new forms of ministry, such as spiritual centres and chaplaincy. De Groot argues against the popular secularisation narrative of western religious decline. Instead he offers an alternative metaphor of 'liquid religious communities' drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, in which religion does not disappear but its resources appear in many other forms.

The book is divided into three major sections. In the first, de Groot describes what is happening as religious institutions look for ways of expressing themselves in 'liquid modernity'. He notes how local churches try to be accessible to the wider public but are faced with the dilemma as to whether they cease to be 'membership' oriented developing activities primarily for their members, or whether they become consumer-oriented service organisations offering a wide-range of programs and services which are 'sold' to the wider public. He describes how these dilemmas have become more acute in mega-churches and also in events such as the Catholic World Youth Day which use marketing techniques to 'sell' their programs and services in such a way that each gathering becomes a 'special event'.

The second section explores attempts of the churches to develop patterns of ministry within the secular world: through broadcast church services, spiritual centres and chaplaincy. In each case, he notes the tensions between being rooted in the institutional churches and serving the wider public. In each case, the churches have lost some control. Indeed, he notes that many chaplains have become 'spiritual counsellors' who legitimize their professions by integrating their work with the process of care.

The third section explores the use of religion in the secular sphere. De Groot tells the story of how mental health care was initiated by the churches. However, over time, it has merged with psychiatric initiatives. Over time, the Christian faith disappeared from the frame of reference and the churches lost all control of these forms of care.

An example is that of the exposition of religion in a museum which focused on what the citizens believed. The museum organized interviews, inter-faith dialogues, and displays of personal symbols of faith. In doing so, the museum portrayed how religion

had become a personal choice and personally shaped, sometimes at odds with religious institutions.

Further examples were plays in the theatre where religious symbols, metaphors, stories and forms of liturgy were used. Sometimes the plays critiqued these religious resources or used them for non-religious purposes such as a play with took practices and symbols of the Last Supper and used them to stage a meal about environmental causes. In these ways, de Groot argues that, contrary to the narrative of secularization, religious elements are being disembedded from the origins in the churches and re-embedded in other spheres of life.

This is an important book and provides a pertinent challenge to the pervasive story of secularization. He poses well the dilemmas facing both local churches and other forms of Christian ministry. De Groot himself writes partly as a sociologist, but also as a practical theologian, concerned for the future of the Church. So the book deserves to be read by academics but also by practitioners. While de Groot makes many academic references, and writes in a careful style, detailing the evidence he has gathered for each point, the book is also very accessible. Someone without any background in sociology would find this book helpful, in making sense of the changes in the expressions of faith that are occurring around us, but also challenging, in terms of finding ways through the cultural changes. The book may well help practitioners to think through what it means to be a local church, and how best to engage in chaplaincy, and what are some of the potential challenges of putting services on-line, for example.

One of the ambiguities in the book is that de Groot moves between the metaphors of liquifying and liquidating. However the process is described, de Groot hopes that the Church may discover its essence: what it is meant to be. De Groot describes this as the development of a 'self-disinterested, radical mission-shaped Church' serving the world, even though the forms of church as we currently know them may well disappear.

I am not sure that de Groot has a strong basis for such optimism. However, the book itself may go just some way in prompting us to look again at our various forms of ministry so that churches and all who serve in ministry may be better equipped to minister to a changing society.

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Irene Alexander and Charles Ringma, eds, *Pub Theology: Where Potato Wedges and a Beer are a Eucharistic Experience* (Manchester, UK: Piquant Editions, 2021), 274 pages.

The days are over when people took their clues about the interpretation of their faith from great volumes of systematic theology which were designed to be universally valid. We recognise today the task of making sense of faith, the task of theology, is a task for everyone and a task that has to be done in context. It is a task that lies at the centre of every kind of ministry. This is a challenge because we often silo our thoughts: keeping theology for Sunday mornings, quite distinct from what we do on Saturday nights, or, for that matter, what we do Monday to Friday. In each sphere of life, we have our own language and our own thoughts, and they do not readily mix.

This book is theology in context. It is born out of personal narratives, told originally in a conversational style as talks in a pub in Brisbane. They seek to overcome the silos and see life in a holistic way. The book is divided into four sections. The first section is about longing and belonging. It deals with the experiences of migration, with living in two locations, and in having a sense of homelessness as a result of many movements across nations, cultures and languages.

The second part is entitled ‘Reflections on Being Human’. Eight chapters deal with different personal experiences: a sense of weakness, divine direction, anger, marriage and divorce, self-righteousness, forgiveness, disability and issues of mental health.

The third part is about vocation. Beginning with a strong affirmation that all (or most) vocations are of equal value within the story of creation, chapters explore personal experiences within specific vocations and how these experiences relate to faith. “De-forming’ experiences are worthy of reflection. The doctor in paediatric palliative care grapples with the age-old issues of theodicy: innocent suffering and a loving God. Other chapters deal with unemployment and laughter and how a prison chaplain has seen God change lives and systems.

The fourth section is on mission and community, mostly dealing with experiences of living alongside and providing assistance to people who have been marginalised from

society. These experiences raise critical questions of the pursuit of economic security and upward social mobility. Another chapter explores what it means to be a neighbour to those who have been marginalised. The final chapter of the book argues for a spirituality not of silence, but of speaking out about injustice and suffering.

In each of the chapters, there is a strong sense of authenticity as the authors tell their story. Perhaps the ‘pub theme’ is reflected in the ways they expose themselves and make themselves vulnerable. Yet, it provides an authenticity which is a strong ground for relating to the traditions of faith. The stories certainly show the great variety of human experiences and frequently the messiness of life. A real strength of this book is that it does not hide from painful childhood experiences, anger and divorce, from mental and physical suffering, from experiences of homelessness and redundancy, nor from the costs of living with and loving people on the margins of society. Everyone will find many experiences in this book which will resonate deeply.

These stories of life experience are complemented by reflections on the Christian faith as it has informed or transformed their lives. Most of the authors are not theologians, and there is nothing systematic about these reflections. Yet, their experiences give their musings a profound sense of reality and provoke theological reflection as books about theology rarely do. How can the biblical teaching about the dangers of wealth and the Australian preoccupation with economic security be lived in today’s world, for example? We may not feel ready to take the road taken by several of these authors, but they do provide some real theological challenges.

There are several great challenges in such an exercise in ‘pub narrative theology’. One is keeping true to the traditions of faith. There were occasions in the book where I felt that the great themes of the fall, sin, salvation, and the issues of hermeneutics were glossed over in ways which did not do justice to the biblical text or subsequent theological reflection. Occasionally there was some ‘proof-texting’ which failed to consider the context of the quoted biblical texts.

Throughout the ages, human beings have drawn God in their own image. They have found the nature of God within their own experiences. We have anthropomorphised God. God has been conceived as a divinised form of our own cultural ideals, partly because the language of our culture forces that upon us. There were times when reading this book that I felt the authors were falling into this trap. They were drawing God in the image of their own experiences. The strength of Christian communities

which exist over time, of biblical documents that were written in another culture from our own, and of a book like this, which brings together diverse personal experiences and expressions of faith, is that there is the potential for correcting our lenses as we are faced with counter-cultural images and ideals.

This is a book for all people in ministry: for all who are helping people to make sense of the faith in their lives, whether that be in preaching, education, or pastoral counselling, for example. It is also a highly readable book for all Christians reflecting on life and faith. It will help us all to do theology in context: overcoming the silos of faith and the realities of everyday life. Readers of this book who reflect on these stories and expressions of faith will find resonances with their own experiences and they may well find their own images of God challenged.

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Daryl Potts, *As For Me and My House: Keys to a Flourishing Family and a Fulfilled Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 215 pages.

One of the most pressing issues for clergy (of both genders) is how to be successful in ministry (whatever that means) without losing your family or your marriage. Too many ministers, their partners or their children walk away from ministry, church, family, and even faith as a result of negative experiences in church life. This happens in churches of all denominations and is belatedly becoming the subject of social research. Daryl Potts is an experienced minister within the Pentecostal Australian Christian Churches (ACC, formerly Assemblies of God in Australia) denomination who has served as a youth minister, pastoral team member, senior minister and regional leader over three decades. At the same time his marriage has flourished and he and his wife brought up three children, all of whom are still active Christians. For these reasons alone, he has the right to speak into this issue. But also, this book is grounded in Potts' doctoral research during which he interviewed many ACC ministers and their spouses about their experience of balancing ministry and family. That makes this book unique and relevant.

The author explains how he went about doing this research, the theological ideas and social science underpinning it, the previous research into this topic and the findings he

came up with. These are summed up in the heading “The Triple ‘A’ Model of Ministry Function and Family Fulfillment.” The three A’s are Aspiration, Awareness and Attention. Potts argues that ministers who have a solid aspiration for their family as well as their ministry, who are aware of the positive and negative experiences ministers and their families face, and who focus on building the positives and minimising or managing the negatives have the best chance of fulfillment in ministry and family life.

Potts draws on other authors who have studied clergy life in Australia and America as well as his own research. This gives everything in this book significant depth and credibility. After an introduction that explains the research project and its underlying assumptions, the three A’s are tackled in turn, followed by a short conclusion and a useful bibliography. Each section contains between two and five chapters that explore aspects of the “A” under consideration. For example, the section on Awareness contains chapters on The Blessings of the Ministry/Family Journey, Ministry-Related Burdens, Family-Related Burdens, The Ministry Couple and The Minister’s Children. Each chapter finishes with a summary, a list of key points covered and suggestions for personal reflection. This makes it easier for readers to find their way around and review what they are learning.

While some of the results of this research may seem obvious, such as the need to give priority to marriage and family over work (in this case, church ministry), such principles are still often ignored. Potts divides his participants broadly into two groups: those who feel positive about their children’s embrace of Christian faith and the church and those whose children have departed from either or both. The conclusion seems to be that ministers and their partners who gave attention to the key issues exposed in the book were more likely to have children who continued to follow the Lord and serve in the church in some capacity.

However, not all the conclusions that emerged from Potts’ research are obvious. One that surprised me was emphasising the positive benefits of being in the ministry for the minister’s partner and children. The family benefits from exposure to significant visiting ministers who come to their church or who they experience at conferences. They also enjoy the benefits of the flexible hours and holiday times the minister enjoys as compared to other occupations. Ministers who focus on these and other benefits with their families can help them embrace a positive view of ministry and church.

However, these benefits do not entirely outweigh the stresses caused by long hours, congregational demands, lack of privacy, financial shortages and other challenges.

This book is a great source of wisdom for new and more experienced ministers. For example, the experienced participants in Potts' study were asked how they would advise a new couple stepping out into ministry and their answers fill the last chapter, covering areas such as prioritising the family, including them in the ministry journey, protecting them from negative church issues, setting up a solid financial structure early on, staying authentic as a person and others.

The book is somewhat repetitive: certain quotes from the participants or other sources are often repeated in several chapters, perhaps because the triple A model is a slightly artificial way of organizing the material. Also the book does not suggest any way that pastors can retrieve what they may have lost through their own false priorities, obsession with ministry success or absence from their children. But these are small flaws; this is a valuable resource that every ministry couple should read carefully and thoughtfully with a view to learning from the wise counsel contained in it.

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Jeremy Riddle, *The Reset: Returning to the Heart of Worship and a Life of Undivided Devotion* (Anaheim, CA: Wholehearted Publishing, 2020), 134 pages.

Having heard Jeremy Riddle many times over the past 10 years, I knew that any book written by him would be insightful, passionate and intense. This book is certainly all of those things! It's a timely book and the more I talk to people about it, I realise that it's not just timely for me, but timely for so many. Even the portions of the book that may not feel as applicable to you personally will, I believe, make you think and ask yourself the question "how does this apply to me?"

The Reset explains that it is not simply a book on worship, but "an appeal to the broader worshiping community to once again re-order their lives and practices in accordance with the sacred and priestly calling they were given and zealously return to the heart of worship."

This has been one of the most powerful and thought-provoking messages that I have encountered for many years. I read it three times in a week. It was a sword and balm to my heart. It made me cry and repent. It challenged me and encouraged me. It has spurred me on and excited my heart. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for anyone following Jesus who has let stuff creep in between their heart and His. I didn't know it, but my heart needed a reset; a recalibration back to pure worship.

Riddle is known best for his worship albums and roles leading corporate worship at Bethel and Anaheim Vineyard. Although written from the perspective of a very influential American worship leader, there is so much of what Jeremy writes that speaks to people in very different contexts. What I really appreciated about this book is that it is clearly written with a deep love and desire for purity in the local and global Church. In the midst of a passionate cry to the Church, worshippers, and worship leaders to reset their hearts back to a pursuit of God, Jeremy doesn't spew bitterness and simply bash the Church. Instead, he consistently fills this book with a message of hope and inspires the reader that pure worship is where we find purpose and our hearts find a home.

As much as I was led on one hand to repent for what I had made worship in my own life, I was equally as inspired on the other hand about the future for my own worship

life and my role as a worship leader. I have been reminded of the call back to the heart of worship – that it's all about Jesus.

This is a constructive book that will firstly deconstruct some of the paradigms that we may have made of worship in a personal and public setting. Secondly, it will then help you go on a journey of rebuilding your framework of what is truly God-honouring and how to worship God in both Spirit and in truth. It is ideal for worship leaders and very helpful for pastors as a whole. However, I believe that it will also speak to the heart of all readers in some way and it will leave them with a personal desire for purity and a passion for public revival. Take this moment to recognise that He is calling you to something greater, something deeper, something transformational.

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