Journal of Contemporary Ministry

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Journal of Contemporary Ministry

About This Journal

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The Editorial Team of the Journal of Contemporary Ministry is comprised of:

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The Journal of Contemporary Ministry will act as a place for reporting research and discussing issues related to contemporary ministry, including related theological and biblical questions.

Its goals are to:

- Stimulate informed discussion regarding issues faced by contemporary Christian churches and ministries worldwide;
- Encourage research, including empirical research, into diverse forms and contexts of contemporary ministry and the practical, theological and biblical issues that arise from ministry practice;
- Enable students and graduates in postgraduate Ministry programs to speak to a wider audience;
- Build the credibility of Ministry as a field of study and research.

The Journal of Contemporary Ministry will provide a specific forum for Harvest Bible College research students and faculty, and other interested people, to publish the results of their research.

It will also provide a potential publishing venue for paper presenters at Harvest's annual research conference.

The Journal of Contemporary Ministry will contain these kinds of materials:

- Peer-reviewed articles based on scholarly research (empirical or theological) into diverse forms and contexts of contemporary ministry, and the practical, theological and biblical issues that arise from ministry practice;
- Pastoral reflections and articles that contribute viewpoints, based on personal experience or theological reflection, on contemporary ministry issues. These may be responses to articles from the Journal;
- Book reviews and/or notes of new publications related to contemporary ministry;
- Articles contributed by postgraduate students, which would also be refereed but may not come up to the level required in the first category;
- A list of recent doctoral research theses completed on contemporary ministry relevant to this journal's focus.

The material we invite covers such topics as:

- Results of empirical research into aspects of contemporary Christian ministry, e.g. youth ministry, children's ministry, pastoral counselling, pastoral leadership, intercultural ministry, etc;
- Theological and biblical reflection on issues that have arisen from the practices of contemporary Christian churches and ministries, e.g. manifestations of the Spirit, worship styles, leadership culture, interfaith matters, political and social engagement, etc;
- Underlying theological questions that lie behind Christian ministry issues, e.g. the role of women's ministry in local churches, ethnic identity, ordination, apostleship, etc;
- Proposals for new expressions or forms of Christian ministry based on social analysis, e.g. how to reach specific sub-cultures.

For further information, please visit the journal website
www.journalofcontemporaryministry.org

Journal of Contemporary Ministry

Editorial

Dr Jon K. Newton

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Editor

I'm a Christian minister as well as a lecturer. As a pastor of a small suburban church, I'm always looking for answers. I want to know what's going on in the world. Specifically, what's going on that affects my life as a Christian and my work as a Christian minister? Where do I find out what God is doing today or about how His servants are "kicking goals" that we can all learn from? More importantly, where do I go to find out whether or not the events, achievements and projects I hear about constantly online, on Facebook or just "on the grapevine" are really as good as they are reported to be, and if so, why are they achieving good things in our world? How can I apply the lessons drawn from such analysis to my life and ministry? Where can I find stimulating responses from my peers about the issues I face? And how do I find the *informed* and *grounded* thinking I need to get out of the rut I sometimes find myself in as a Christian leader?

Busy pastors get news about the latest trends, ideas and methods largely anecdotally or from conferences. When it comes to assessing why some churches and ministries are growing and succeeding and others are failing or declining, we often tend to fall back on one or more of these sources:

- The minister's own interpretation of what's happening: "my church has grown from 200 to 800 in one year because we introduced the … program from…"
- Denominational traditions: "our movement is growing steadily because we have the right interpretations of Scripture."
- Anecdotal accounts: "this mission is doing great things because the leader spends four hours in prayer every day. That's what I heard."

- Second-hand theories: "every minister that God is using today has embraced a missional approach to church life."
- Theological rationalisations: "my church split and has never recovered because I made a stand for the Truth and people don't want to hear it."
- Historical ignorance: "we'd see great revival today if only we followed the ways of the Puritans."
- Prejudice: "the only reason *that* church is growing is because they compromise on the gospel."
- Psychological copouts: "their church is growing because they have a level of ability or personality I could never reach."
- Generalized accepted wisdom: "Christianity is in decline. Everyone knows that."

Now of course no one reading this would ever base their ideas on such shallow foundations. But ask yourself, how do I assess ministry performance or church health? For example, to what do you attribute the incredible growth of the Hillsong phenomenon? Check to see if your immediate answer doesn't fall into one of these categories.

Of course, all the reasons given above *may* be right, at least sometimes. But how would we ever know? How much research is done to find out?

In Kevin Ward's stimulating book *Losing Our Religion?* (reviewed in this journal), he reports how data from late in the twentieth century challenged the "accepted wisdom" that secularism would inevitably displace religion in the modern world (Ward 2014, p. ix). He also probes the consensus in some circles that conservative churches are growing whereas "liberal" ones are declining, with a study of four different churches in New Zealand. We need to do the hard work in research (quantitative, qualitative, historical, theological, etc) if we want to help ministers, churches and other Christian organisation make well-informed decisions.

In some ways, our challenge is like that of the early empirical scientists. Breaking out from the traditional explanations of the natural world based on Aristotle, Ptolemy or even unreflective readings of Scripture, they went out into the natural world to find out for themselves how it worked. Christian researchers need to have the courage to do the same: to break out of the old paradigms, ask the hard questions, and thus develop new ministry models for the 21st Century.

Harvest Bible College in Australia is highly focused on preparing people for Christian ministry, as reflected in our mission statement "Training Effective Ministry Worldwide to Serve Local Churches." The College has always insisted on maintaining this ministry focus in its degree programs. At Harvest, we've also been steadily building a research culture as we move increasingly into postgraduate courses. We've successfully run a Master of Arts in Ministry for 15 years. We've hosted a successful ministry research conference for several years. Now we've launched a Doctor of Ministry program, fully accredited through the Australian government's tertiary education agency, TEQSA.

Because of this, I was trawling through the internet and other sources looking for new journals to add to our library, to support the doctoral students as they investigate

questions about real ministry today, and I discovered a real dearth. There are some good journals on Christian Ministry as a broad field, or on the related field of Practical Theology. There are journals with a great historical base. There are some broad-based, interdisciplinary, journals in which great individual articles on contemporary ministry have appeared. There are some good journals on highly specialized forms of ministry such as pastoral care. And of course, there are any number of great journals on theology and biblical studies. But there doesn't appear to be a journal focused primarily on the field of contemporary ministry. Until now, that is.

This new journal seeks to go some way towards filling that gap. It builds on the presentations given at the Harvest Research conferences (though not exclusively) and hopefully provides a new avenue for research on contemporary ministry to be facilitated and broadcast to a wider audience.

Let me unpack what I as the Editor, and our editorial board and team, hope this journal will achieve.

1. **We hope it will stimulate and report on solid research into aspects of Christian ministry.** We are particularly focusing on the *practice* of ministry, though not neglecting its theological foundations and implications. We will interpret the word "ministry" fairly broadly but normally avoid ministry areas covered by their own specialist journals, such as school education and counselling. We will especially promote various kinds of *empirical* research on ministry.
2. **We aim to focus on "contemporary" ministry.** We define that not as a particular stream or style of ministry (cool, trendy, emerging, etc) but ministry as it looks and works NOW in whatever contexts or traditions it is found. We want to find out what Christian ministries are doing today for the Kingdom of God, and what they might do even more with the right analysis of their context and methods. I hope this will uncover some aspects of current ministry that are creative, innovative, impacting, unusual, Spirit-inspired and/or effective. We will sometimes explore what hasn't worked (or is somehow flawed) and why, and how it might have been done better, but we aim to have a positive tone throughout.
3. **We hope it will encourage more people to do research and report on it in a friendly setting.** We will include contributions from serious researchers but also serving ministers and postgraduate students. I hope that these reports and articles will be widely read and will stimulate more thought and more research. I hope that this research will lead to positive changes in how we do ministry.
4. **We hope it will help create a new kind of discussion about ministry** that is biblically-informed, theologically sharp, spiritually alive *and* empirically grounded. A discussion that helps pastors and others break out of the lazy, shallow patterns of thought I listed above. As a result, I hope we will see a new generation of ministers rise up who have sharp minds, good research skills, an openness to new ideas and Spirit-filled hearts.
5. **As a result, we aim to provide an excellent resource** for practicing ministers as well as other researchers.

In order to achieve its goals, each issue of this journal will contain:

- Four strongly researched **articles** that have been through a process of "double blind" peer review.
- A **pastoral reflection** by an active Christian minister, one which will be thought-provoking and well informed by reading and praxis.
- A stand-out **essay** by one of our Harvest postgraduate students.
- A great collection of **book reviews**. This journal aims to be the go-to place for anyone looking for books that reflect the latest good thinking and praxis in contemporary ministry.
- A list of **recent theses** in the field of contemporary ministry.
- And maybe something else surprising or unusual.

The material we invite will cover such topics as:

1. Results of empirical research into aspects of contemporary Christian ministry, such as youth ministry, children's ministry, pastoral leadership, church planting, intercultural ministry, workplace ministry and healing ministries, just to name a few.
2. Theological and biblical reflection on issues that have arisen from the practices of contemporary Christian churches and ministries; for example, manifestations of the Spirit, worship styles, leadership culture, interfaith matters, political and social engagement, and so on.
3. Underlying theological questions that lie behind Christian ministry issues, such as the role of women's ministry in local churches, ethnic identity, ordination, apostleship and others.
4. Proposals for new expressions or forms of Christian ministry based on social analysis, such as how to reach specific sub-cultures.

We have successfully recruited some great researchers to our Editorial Board, as you can see in 'About This Journal'. We have also formed an active and enthusiastic working team that is responsible for the production of each issue. More important are those who write for the journal.

This issue's four leading articles all relate to the question of how the contemporary church operates in the era we now find ourselves in, at least in countries like Australia, an era which is somewhat postmodern, post-Christian, but also post-secular.

Here is a brief introduction to the authors:

Dr Philip Hughes is the senior researcher with the Christian Research Association in Australia and now also the Chief Supervisor for Postgraduate Research at Harvest. He is one of the most experienced researchers on Australian Christianity and its social and cultural context. He is the author of several books and editor of *Pointers*, a regular bulletin on research findings from the work of CRA. Philip's article explores the connections between the culture of churches and the surrounding social context, both as they are and as they should be. This will help ministers think about how much they should resist and/or embrace the changing culture we find ourselves in.

Dr Juhani Tuovinen is Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Research Fellow at Graeme Clark Research Institute, Tabor College, Adelaide, Australia. His article

on different ways and understandings of coming to faith draws on two important research data bases associated with the National Church Life Survey. It's a great contribution to an understanding of faith journeys and a good model of research based on existing data. Pastors will find suggestive thoughts about how they might seek to stimulate faith in their own context.

Pastor Graeme Flett is currently a member of the academic staff of Laidlaw College (Auckland campus), New Zealand, involved primarily with the development and implementation of the ministry internship program within their undergraduate degrees. He is studying towards a PhD through Otago University and is a credentialed Pastor with the Elim Churches of New Zealand. His article on "Visual Technologies within a Consumerist Culture" probes behind the image of the "happening" church to investigate how these images are produced. For a pastor, this article raises disturbing questions about how our love of new technologies may have unwanted side-effects.

Pastor Andrew Groza has been a youth and young adults pastor at a large Pentecostal church in Melbourne and is now a VET Trainer and Online Coordinator at Harvest Bible College, Melbourne, with a passion for reaching the younger generations with a relevant Christian message. His article "With the curiosity of a bygone era," explores the work of the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) in the light of the post-Christian context the western church finds itself in. There are some useful thoughts here for pastors as we try to manage the interaction between the gospel and our current cultural settings in the context of the local church.

This Issue's pastoral reflection comes from **Pastor Jeremy Weetman**, who is the pastor of Eikon Community on the Gold Coast, Queensland and currently a DMin student and adjunct lecturer with Harvest. It's a very encouraging appreciation of the work of pastors.

The student essay has been written by **Asanga De Costa**, who recently completed the MA at Harvest and is now back in ministry in Sri Lanka, pastoring a local church and pioneering some new forms of Christian ministry. In his essay, he explores leadership and authority models in Sri Lanka from a cultural and biblical perspective. This essay raises important questions that all Christian leaders should consider.

I commend these articles and the other material in issue Number 1 to you and welcome your feedback via our Journal of Contemporary Ministry forum - http://journalofcontemporaryministry.blogspot.com.au/

I would also like to encourage you write for the journal and to present papers at this year's Harvest Research Conference around the theme "Church and Ministry: a Contemporary Voice." You'll find the call for papers in this journal and here is a link to a presentation by Dr Ian Grant on "How to craft your Master's Degree essays into a brilliant conference presentation!"
Part 1 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyf3LGIWJyQ
Part 2 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc5_-zlf3Qg

Enjoy the journey with us into contemporary ministry research!

Journal of Contemporary Ministry

The Multi-Dimensional Issue of Culture and Christian Ministry.

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Abstract

The categories of the theology of culture developed by H. Richard Neibuhr in *Christ and Culture* can be applied to approaches to ministry. Empirical studies of the church in northern Thailand demonstrated that in terms of architecture, the forms of service and other observable forms, the churches were often 'counter-cultural'. However, in other ways, such as in the themes of sermons and how they were developed, there was a strong Thai cultural flavour. Observations show that many mainstream Australian churches express themselves in ways which are counter to contemporary culture, for example in their architecture and forms of music, although their values and emphases often reflect contemporary culture. Charismatic churches more frequently use contemporary forms of architecture and music, but are counter-cultural, for example, in their teaching on many aspects of life, such as pre-marital sexuality. Heelas and Woodhead argue that charismatic churches are closer to contemporary culture in the ways they are open to the 'subjectivity' of formation of the self in contemporary Western societies, and suggest that may explain their greater appeal to many younger people than the appeal of the mainstream churches. There are several dimensions to ministry, including, for example, contextual, substantive and essential, which may all relate to culture in different ways. The challenge for theology is to work out in which dimensions ministry should be cultural, in which it should be 'counter-cultural', and in which it should be seeking to transform the culture.

Introduction

Ministry and Culture

In 1951, H. Richard Neibuhr published his most famous work, *Christ and Culture*. In it, he reviews the history of Christian theology and outlines five ways in which theologians have identified faith in relation to culture. He summarised them under the headings of:

Christ against culture;
Christ of culture;
Christ above culture;
Christ and culture in paradox; and
Christ transforming culture.

While Neibuhr described Christian theologies, these headings can also be applied to approaches to ministry. Indeed, the dilemma of how church life should be developed in relation to culture has confronted every cross-cultural mission: to what extent should ministry be developed in a way that absorbs patterns of culture, and to what extent should ministry involve patterns which are seen to transcendent every culture (see, for example, the discussions in Hesselgrave 1978 and Kraft 1979). Some approach ministry as if it is fundamentally 'against culture'. Ministry, in terms of the organisation of worship, pastoral care, and Christian guidance, is sometimes approached from a perspective which argues that the duty of Christian ministers is to ensure that the patterns of the New Testament, assumed to be the divine patterns, given by God, should be used in every aspect of personal life and the life of the church. Others, however, have argued either explicitly or implicitly that ministry must draw on the forms and processes of the receptor culture. Other approaches to ministry can be identified comparable to the other categories Neibuhr identified. The purpose of this paper is not to explore Neibuhr's categories in themselves but to demonstrate how ministry is multidimensional in relation to culture and how it may reflect both ends of the spectrum 'Christ against culture' and 'Christ in culture' at the same time. The contention of this paper is that a significant challenge in ministry is being both 'in the culture' and 'against culture' in appropriate ways.

One perspective on the history of ministry is that it has constantly been weakened by being drawn away from its New Testament roots by the culture in which it is situated. Time and again, through history, there has been a need for renewal which would revive the New Testament patterns of ministry, regarded as the divine order which transcended every culture. Such claims were a significant part of the Protestant reformation in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, both in the Presbyterian, Lutheran and Anabaptist movements. The Presbyterians, for example in the Prelude to The Scots Confession of Faith, saw themselves as 'embracing the purity of Christ's Gospel' (as reprinted in Owen 1984, p. 64). At the heart of Lutheranism was the teaching that the Bible was the only source of divinely revealed knowledge from God, and that the ministry of the church should be purified to reflect its teaching (Plass 1959, p. 88). Similar claims were made by the various parts of the Restoration movement of the 18th and 19th centuries when groups such as the Churches of Christ and the Brethren emerged, and again by the early Pentecostals. Such claims have been made more recently by some, such as Frost and Hirsh (2003, pp. 14-16) in *The Shaping of Things to Come,* who have hailed the end of Christendom as the end of the perversions of the faith

caused by the alliance of state and church that began with the Roman Emperor Constantine.

There are many interpretations of what it has meant to restore New Testament patterns. For the Baptists, it meant rejecting infant baptism and adopting exclusively adult baptism. For the Brethren and the Churches of Christ, it meant the rejection of clericalism. For Frost and Hirsh (2003, p. 15), it has meant the adoption of a mission-oriented spirituality. In terms of practical ministry in churches, the maintenance of ministry patterns built on the New Testament has been interpreted in a great many ways. For the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, for example, it means not using musical instruments in worship and singing only the Psalms and not celebrating Christmas because Christmas is not mentioned as a festival in the New Testament. For Protestant churches, it has meant that worship revolves around the hearing of the Word of God, through the reading of Scripture and listening to its exposition in the sermon.

However, there are others who have emphasised the need for ministry to be developed in the terms of the contemporary culture, perhaps reflecting a theology of the Christ of culture or the Christ above culture. They have argued that the theology, as an expression of faith, must be framed in terms that are meaningful in the contemporary culture. One of the most comprehensive statements of such views is that of Paul Tillich's systematic theology. He introduces his systematic theology as an attempt to adapt the Christian message to the modern mind through a method of correlation. He proposes a 'theological method in which message and situation are related in such a way that neither of them are obliterated' (Tillich 1968, p. 8).

In ministry, too, people have sought to use local cultural forms in their expression. This has often been most intentional in places in which the Christian faith has been planted within the last century or two. In Bali, for example, some churches have been intentional in building their churches using the patterns and forms of Balinese architecture and adorned with Balinese art. The Gospel has been proclaimed using Balinese dance and drama. The traditional black robe of the minister has been replaced by a white robe, symbolic of relations to good rather than evil spirits. It has been argued by Balinese church leaders that 'indigenization or contextualization is a tool for communicating the Gospel so that the Gospel message becomes relevant [and ..] to root itself in the soul of the society' (Mastra 1980, p. 272).

What would an outsider see if they observed Christian ministry in our Australian churches? Would they conclude that, in general, that ministry was counter-cultural, justified in terms of the patterns of the New Testament? Or would they see ministry as primarily reflecting contemporary Western culture?

Multiple Dimensions to Ministry in Thailand

Many years ago, I had the opportunity to think in-depth about this issue while observing ministry in the Church of Christ in Thailand. Taking myself out of my own culture, away from the language and patterns of my own experience, gave me the opportunity to reflect on the issue at greater depth. I spent some time examining the northern Thai culture, including observing Buddhist festivals and weekly services of worship in northern Thailand. How did the Church of Christ relate, on the one hand to Thai culture, and on the other, to the patterns of the New Testament?

The northern Thai church was founded by Presbyterian missionaries who first settled in northern Thailand around 1867. Daniel McGilvary founded the church in

northern Thailand and led it for more than 40 years until his death in 1911 (McGilvary 2002). Presbyterian missionaries continued to come to Thailand and there were a number of American Presbyterian missionaries there in the late 1970s when I conducted my research there. Most of these people were teaching in the theological college and in advisory roles. Just a few were involved in rural churches and in practical ministry. Most ministry in the local churches was conducted by Thai people who had been trained in the theological college in Chiang Mai.

On the surface, many dimensions of ministry of the northern Thai churches reflected the patterns of the Presbyterian church from which the missionaries came. The architecture of the churches was similar, with rectangular buildings and usually a tower to house a bell, as can be seen in the picture of First Church, Chiang Mai. Some modifications had been made in more recent church buildings to allow the air to circulate more easily. Inside were wooden pews similar to those in poorer churches in the USA, very different from the mats in the Buddhist temples where people sat on the floor.

The Original First Church, Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand.

Ministers wore blue robes similar to those used by the ministers of the USA, despite the warmth of the Thai climate. They spoke from pulpits similar to those of Presbyterian churches in the USA, quite different from the pulpits in the Buddhist temples where Buddhist monks would sit to read their sermons.

The music was similar to that used in the USA. Indeed, of the 247 hymns in the hymnbook of the Church of Christ in Thailand as used in 1980, just eleven had been written by Thai people, two or three came from Japan or India, and the remaining 95.5 per cent were translations from Western hymnbooks (Hughes 1983, p. 101) Churches had either a small electronic organ or a piano. Thai instruments were not used. Indeed,

Thai music is quite different from Western music, based on seven evenly spaced tones in an octave, compared with 8 unevenly spaced tones in Western music. However, Western music was always used in churches in Thailand, presumably because this was the music most familiar to the Western missionaries. The cultural patterns of ministry were predominantly Western, neither Biblical nor Thai.

Yet, at the heart of faith for many Thai Christians, as for many Thai Buddhists, is the affirmation of the popular Thai expression of the law of karma 'Do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil'. Interviews were conducted with pastors and elders of Thai churches as part of the research on culture and faith in northern Thailand. When they were asked what they thought about karma, most said that it was a Buddhist, not a Christian, term. Others said that it could be understood from a Christian perspective as what God ordains. Another part of the research involved surveys of university students in northern Thailand. When approximately 200 Thai Christian and Buddhist university students were asked whether the statement 'Do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil' was true, 81 per cent of the Christians and 71 per cent of the Buddhists affirmed it, most others saying they did not know whether it was true or not. The differences between the Christian and Buddhist affirmation were not significant (Hughes 1983, p. 171).

Content analysis of the sermons collected in northern Thai rural churches in 1980 demonstrated that the sermons had a strong Thai flavour. The content of the preaching reflected the major tenets of the Christian faith as they had been taught. Yet, the emphases were different. There was little attempt, for example, to deal with the message of Easter. In thirty sermons that were recorded in the research in northern Thai village churches, only in three were accounts given of Jesus' death. One described it as the struggle over the powers of darkness, another as a 'sacrifice for others' and the third as a supreme expression of God's love. The concept of atonement or sacrifice for sin was never mentioned in those sermons (Hughes 1983, p. 186). Easter was offensive in the Thai worldview. It did not fit easily with the Thai sense that being murdered must mean that one has 'bad karma' from previous lives, that it is something shameful and humiliating. Christmas, on the other hand, was celebrated with great enthusiasm. This enthusiasm might be seen as rooted in the idea of the 'coming of the great king'. The king's visit is always a time of great celebration among Thai people, for the king is the great patron of the people and, in some ways, a symbol of deity. The word used in Thailand to commonly describe the event celebrated by Christmas is the same as the word used for a royal visit: 'gan-saded-ma' (Hughes 1983, p. 194).

Many of the sermons reflected teaching about good moral behaviour and religious practices. The language was Christian and Thai Buddhist terms were rarely used. However, the underlying themes were often not so different from those of the sermons in the Buddhist temples. Certainly, the practical examples of the exhortation to religious practices were a little different. Many Buddhist sermons could be seen as expositions on the theme of 'Do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil'. This is the Thai formulation of the basic moral universal law: the law of karma. We receive the consequences of our actions. So most Christian sermons could be seen as expositions of that same basic moral law. If you do good (in terms of Christian behaviour, of course), you will receive good. If you do evil, you will receive evil.

Christian ministry, as observed in Thailand at that time, was multi-dimensional in relation to culture. On the surface, in terms of the style of buildings, ministers' robes, music and orders of service, the patterns were foreign. The culture which had informed them was clearly American Presbyterian culture. In terms of the content of ministry, the

message that was conveyed through the preaching, and in those aspects of the Christian faith that were emphasised, there was a Thai cultural flavour which had its origins in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition from India.

The importance of these observations is that it is necessary to look at ministry as multi-dimensional. One might make similar observations of the multi-dimensional way in which ministry relates to culture in Australia. Different dimensions of ministry may relate to culture in quite different ways.

Multiple Dimensions to Ministry in Australia

Contemporary large charismatic churches in Australia often have seating patterns like those at a theatre: around a central stage. The music reflects contemporary styles, perhaps somewhere between a small folk band or a rock band. One might draw parallels between the form of presentation used by preachers with speakers at other events such as political rallies. The use of the data projector for songs and other information reflect contemporary teaching environments. Indeed, some charismatic and evangelical churches have been intentional in trying to develop a context in which people who do not have a history of church attendance feel at home. The context reflects the culture. In this regard, the context suggests a 'Christ of culture' pattern.

Entering a church of a mainstream denomination, however, one may well be struck by the distinctive architecture and patterns of seating. The architecture of most mainstream churches is dominated by the traditions of faith and particular theological expressions. There is nothing in contemporary culture quite like the cathedral with its rows of seats under a very high ceiling. The cross-formation of many churches is meant to be distinctively Christian. While some Catholic churches have moved to a semi-circular format since Vatican II, the dominance of the altar continues to set them apart from other contemporary buildings.

While there is some variation in the music in mainstream churches, many still use some form of organ and use classical styles of music that have their origins in earlier centuries. Many of the hymns were written in the 18th and 19th centuries, although there is a sprinkling of later hymns in the hymnbooks. The very fact of using a hymnbook suggests a style of gathering very different from most other gatherings of people in contemporary Western society. The National Church Life Survey reported that 70 per cent of Anglican and 71 per cent of Uniting Church attenders found traditional music helpful compared with just 17 per cent of attenders at the Assemblies of God (Kaldor et al. 1995, p. 35).

The dress used by the leader in a traditional church is also usually distinctive and bears little or no resemblance to the dress used in other contemporary contexts. According to the National Life Survey of 1991, 72 per cent of Anglican and 30 per cent of Uniting Church attenders preferred their clergy to wear robes, compared with just 1 per cent of attenders at the Assemblies of God and 1 per cent at Baptist Churches (Kaldor et al. 1995, p. 33).

The patterns of worship in mainstream churches generally reflect traditional theological patterns rather than contemporary patterns. Indeed, the patterns have been developed over hundreds of years and often use formulations, such as creeds, that were adopted fifteen hundred years ago or more. Thus, the nature of worship in most mainstream churches suggests a theology of 'Christ against culture'.

While the expressions of worship in music, the architecture of the buildings and the dress of the pastor, in most Australian Pentecostal and charismatic churches reflects contemporary Australian culture, many beliefs and values that are maintained by most Australians Pentecostals and charismatics are 'counter-cultural'.

If one takes the area of permitted sexual expression and the relationship of sexuality to marriage, for example, it is evident that Pentecostals and Baptists hold very different views to the dominant views in the Australian population. Overall, 9 per cent of the Australian population believes that sexual relations before marriage are always wrong, compared with 42 per cent of Baptists, and 78 per cent of Pentecostals (Hughes and Fraser 2014, p. 88).

On the other hand, in mainstream churches where the music, architecture and dress of the leader of worship is 'counter-cultural', many beliefs and values are close to those found in the wider society. Thus, in contrast to the Baptists and Pentecostals, just 4 per cent of Anglicans, 8 per cent of those who identify with the Uniting Church, 12 per cent of Catholics and 14 per cent of Orthodox believe that sexual relations before marriage are always wrong (Hughes and Fraser 2014, p. 88).

These different views of sexuality before marriage correlate with the age of marriage. Among people in the 20 to 24 year age group, 15 per cent of Pentecostals and 13 per cent of Baptists were in a registered marriage, compared with just 4 per cent of Anglicans and Catholics, and 5 per cent of Orthodox and Uniting Church people, and 6 per cent of the total population (Hughes and Fraser 2014, p. 35). In this regard, then, the patterns of life among Pentecostals and Baptists reflect teaching which is quite different from the dominant patterns in Australian culture, while the patterns in the mainstream denominations are similar to those in the wider culture.

The Essential Dimension of Ministry

In their study of religion and spirituality, Heelas and Woodhead (2005) make some interesting observations. They argue that the major change in the nature of Western culture has been a re-defining of the goals of life. At its heart, they see a change in how the aims of life are conceived: from fulfilling duties associated with one's social roles (referred to as 'life-as') to the fulfilment of the individual in terms of knowing oneself and responding to one's inner deep desires (referred to as 'subjective-life'). While they argue that this change in culture initiated what they describe as the 'spiritual revolution', it also had a varied impact on different types of churches. They argued that those churches which were least open to the fulfilment of the subjectivity of individuals declined most rapidly while those churches most attuned to fulfilling the subjectivity of individuals experienced least decline, some even growing. In other words, they are suggesting that there is an 'essential' dimension of ministry which has to do to the ways in which ministry relates to how people approach the fulfilment of life. They argue that how this 'essential' dimension of ministry is developed will affect whether churches will attract or deter people from participating. In other words, if ministry is seen by people to correlate with how they see life being fulfilled, then people will be attracted to it. If it is not seen as correlated to that fulfilment, it will be seen as irrelevant to life.

The general argument of Heelas and Woodhead is that religion is associated with 'life-as' modes of living and is thus experiencing decline. On the other hand, spirituality is associated with 'subjective-life' and is consequently attracting more people. Contemporary forms of spirituality are more in tune with current Western culture, with the exploration of the inner self, than religion, which is primarily about duties defined in

terms of obedience to external authorities, such as church institutions, the Bible or God. Heelas and Woodhead argue that religion continues to be primarily about fulfilling 'life-as' roles well: about being a better mother, a more devoted follower of Jesus, a more obedient child (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Chapter 4, Section 4, para.2). The spiritual practitioners do not demand commitment to particular doctrinal belief systems. The people who turn to them do not face the prospect of being 'preached at or judged' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Chapter 4, Section 2, para. 17). Rather, clients are invited to explore what works for them, what fits with their personal experience.

While Heelas and Woodhead argue that all churches see truth and goodness, not in terms of the cultivation of the unique self but in terms of obedience to God, they actually relate to 'subjective-life' differently. Heelas and Woodhead have developed a typology of churches reflecting these differences and they identify them as:

- churches of humanity
- churches of difference
- churches of experiential difference, and
- churches of experiential humanity.

The churches of humanity emphasise the worship of God through the service of humanity. Many of these churches, Heelas and Woodhead suggest, are mainline and liberal, both Protestant and Catholic. They are liberal in that they offer a level of freedom and tolerance and emphasise ethics over dogma and love over the law. However, Heelas and Woodhead (2005, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 10) suggest that because of their strong emphasis on serving others, they are the least open to the exploration of the subjective self of all the church types. They pay little attention to the individual's experiences, needs, desires and moods, directing attention to the service of others.

Indeed, according to Heelas and Woodhead, even personal faith is not often discussed in the churches of humanity. The repetition of set liturgies, responses and hymns, the use of the lectionary, they argue, encourages people to conform their subjectivities to the common life of the church and discourages people from thinking about their own lives. Heelas and Woodhead argue that while there is some interest among members of the 'churches of humanity' in subjective-life forms, such as in mysticism, meditation and so on, these churches focus on life-as duties to others. There has been a humanising of faith, but not a subjectivising.

The churches of difference, Heelas and Woodhead (2005, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 9) suggest, are churches which 'stress the distance between God and humanity, creator and creation, and the necessary subordination of the latter to the former'. These are mostly the evangelical churches. Heelas and Woodhead argue that they actually give more attention to 'subjective life' in their focus on reconstructing it, on 'being born again to new life'. These churches, they argue, appeal to those people whose lives are not working. They offer healing and peace, hope and security as they emphasise that people are loved by God. These congregations actually pay considerable attention to life's problems and to enhancing memories, moods and feelings, for example, through the singing of choruses. They seek to make people *feel* better (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 13). On the other hand, these churches seek to do that by encouraging people to surrender their lives and their autonomy to God and, to that extent, reject some of the inner experiences and directions a person may have.

The experiential form of churches of difference, Heelas and Woodhead (2005, Chapter 1, Section 2, para 14) argue, is found in the charismatic churches. Here, the 'Word' is not just the external body of Scripture but the living reality of God in people's lives. There is less emphasis on external conformity in the 'experiential churches of difference' than on the Holy Spirit becoming the inner core of subjective life and guiding and directing it from within. Thus, worship is less regulated and more personally subjective, although Heelas and Woodhead argue that only a narrow range of emotions are able to be expressed in worship, in particular, gratitude, joy, love and celebration. Heelas and Woodhead also note that only certain forms of subjective life are permitted. For example, homosexual feelings are taught as being unacceptable. People are constantly reminded they must fix their eyes on Jesus.

Heelas and Woodhead (2005, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 17) argue that churches which went furthest in 'authorizing subjective-life' were the **churches of experiential humanity** which include Unitarians and the Society of Friends. These churches, they suggested, encouraged individuals 'to forge their own unique life paths'. They allowed people to disagree and to form their own opinions. They encouraged people to experiment with different types of spirituality, following their hearts. God is presented not as an external authority, but as the deepest, spiritual dimension of all life. Nevertheless, Heelas and Woodhead argue there remains in these churches a strong stress on the overriding duty of caring for others and for the whole planet.

In relation to the basic way of approaching life, then, Heelas and Woodhead have argued that the 'churches of humanity' are 'counter-cultural'. Despite their attitudes to some issues such as sexuality, their dominant patterns of ministry provide little space for the self-realisation of the individual.

In contrast, Heelas and Woodhead argue that the evangelical churches are predominantly 'churches of difference' and actually give greater space to personal feelings and to people's individual challenges in life in a way that, to some extent, provides some space for the subjectivity of the individual. On the other hand, Heelas and Woodhead argue, these churches place significant limits on self-realisation and self-expression in their stress of submission to God's will. If Heelas and Woodhead were using Neibuhr's terminology, they might be suggesting that in this fundamental dimension of ministry, the churches of difference are advocating a 'Christ as transformer of culture' approach.

The experiential form of churches of difference, predominantly the charismatic and Pentecostal churches, give greater space to personal feelings and to self-realisation than the evangelical churches, according to Heelas and Woodhead. They do this through their emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the inner lives of individuals. Hence, while the language these churches use is often quite distinctive in its references to the Holy Spirit, rather than to the psychological terminology of self-expression and self-realisation, Heelas and Woodhead believe that ministry in these churches is more aligned than in most other churches with the ways people conceive of life within contemporary Western culture.

One wonders whether or not the observation of Heelas and Woodhead is true of Australian Pentecostal churches. Certainly, the patterns of ethics and behaviour among Pentecostals in relation to sexuality and marriage are highly distinctive. Even more than evangelical churches, the Pentecostals appear to be quite strongly 'counter-cultural' in these matters. More research would need to be done in Australia to determine whether

the assessment of Heelas and Woodhead is valid. The point is that the relationship between culture and Christian ministry is multi-dimensional. Three major dimensions of the relationship have been explored here. We will use three words to describe them:

- **the contextual dimension:** the environment and patterns of ministry, including, for example, the style of architecture of the church building, the dress of the leader and the style of music;
- **the substantive dimension:** which has to do with the 'substance' of ministry and includes the teaching about faith and about the values associated with faith, such as values associated with sexuality and marriage; and
- **the essential dimension:** which is the ways ministry seeks to address the meaning and fulfilment of life.

What has been observed is that the ministry in a church may relate to culture in several ways at the same time. In some aspects, the patterns of ministry may be counter-cultural, in other ways, they may reflect the culture, and in other ways again, may suggest they are seeking to transform the culture.

How Then Should Ministry Relate to Culture?

A major challenge for Christian ministry is working out in what ways ministry should relate to culture, noting that this is a multi-dimensional problem. Heelas and Woodhead argue that if the cultural pattern of contemporary Western society in which life is conceived in terms of the fulfilment of the subjective life of the individual, is ignored, people will simply ignore the churches. The very aims and objectives of the church will make little sense to them. In reality, it is probably not as simple as that. There are probably people who would prefer that the 'self' is presented to them in a concrete way rather than discovering it through 'self-realisation'. Nevertheless, the point that Heelas and Woodhead are making, that religious groups need to take some account of the basic conceptions of life that are rooted deep in the culture, is worth noting.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to draw firm theological conclusions as to how the contextual and substantive dimensions of ministry should relate to culture. Every aspect of ministry in those contextual, substantive and essential dimensions needs separate consideration. Many aspects of ministry, such as patterns of leadership, include both contextual and substantive dimensions. One might argue, for example, that at one level the processes of decision-making and the roles played by leadership in those are 'contextual'. At another level, the extent to which leadership seeks to develop patterns of either the 'big man' or 'the servant' come much closer to the very nature of what Christian communities are about, and thus may be considered 'substantive' (see, for example, the discussion in Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006). The point of this paper is not to resolve these issues, or to enter into theological debate about the details, but to point out that these issues of ministry are multi-dimensional. There is no simple choice between ministry which is 'counter-cultural' and ministry which accommodates to the cultural context. Rather, ministry can be, at the same time, both counter-cultural in some aspects and contextualised in others. All ministry must, in some respects, be counter-cultural and in other respects accommodate to the local culture in which it takes place.

What is clear from both the Thai and Australian examples and the research of Heelas and Paul is that, the ways in which ministry is both counter-cultural and

accommodates to the cultural context are significant for effective communication with people. In very simple terms, in the processes of communication, there must be some accommodation to culture, or what is communicated will not be understood. On the other hand, unless there is something to communicate, and that content or substance offers something new or different, it is likely that the communication will be considered irrelevant.

In other words, ministry must take place within cultural contexts and forms and to that extent be 'of the local culture', if it is going to be understood. This is commonly noted in the desire that ministry be incarnational (see, for example, the discussion in Hughes 1982). At the same time, the incarnation was not simply the appearance of another human being. Through the difference in the way Jesus lived his life, people caught a glimpse of a God who transcends the boundaries of every culture.

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Cultural Differences between Australian Denominations on Coming to Faith.

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Abstract

In 2001 and 2006 church attendees in many denominations across Australia were surveyed about various aspects of coming to faith. Many substantial similarities and differences were found, such as the importance of various factors in bringing them to faith and the ages at which they came to faith. The results indicate that there are important cultural differences in the way coming to faith is understood and acted on in the various denominations. In this paper the empirical evidence from two national surveys will be considered, highlighting what the various denominations can learn from each other.

Introduction

What are the cultural differences between Australian churches and denominations in the process of coming to faith? What did they find helpful for coming to faith? These are the questions this paper seeks to address on the basis of empirical evidence from two national surveys. An exploration of these questions may lead the Christian community in Australia, and beyond, to reconsider how we do evangelism, church practice and the religious education of young people.

So what is culture? In what sense is this term being used in this paper? According to the Macquarie Dictionary (2009) the sociological meaning of culture is 'the sum of total ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is transmitted from one generation to another' (p. 414). In this sense this term fits the purpose of this discussion. What we shall be examining here are the ways of living and behaving that

churches and denominations have built up over time, and which they pass to new generations, with regard to coming to Christian faith. That is, how do they view the process of coming to faith? How do they provide means and mechanisms to assist people to come to faith in their congregations?

The national surveys discussed in this paper are the National Church Life Surveys (http://www.ncls.org.au), which are regularly conducted across most denominations in Australia in the same years as the Australian Census. The NCLS surveys commenced in 1991 and have been conducted every five years since then. This study draws on specific limited versions of the 2001 and 2006 *Attender* surveys. The NCLS survey process also includes surveys of the church leaders, but the *Leaders* surveys were not considered in this study. The *Leaders* surveys would form a useful comparison with respect to what the leaders think they are doing, or what are their perceptions, and how do they match or disagree with the attendees' views elicited in these attendee surveys.

In this study specialised smaller surveys are examined, rather than the large scale NCLS attendee surveys. These limited surveys asked more specific questions about coming to faith than the overall large common attendee surveys. Thus the information unearthed by these surveys is particularly pertinent to the questions posed for this study. The number of people responding to these surveys were 5,162 in 2001 (NCLS Survey C), and 6,913 in 2006 (NCLS Survey I) across Australia.

The denominations were grouped together as part of the NCLS survey methodology and the only single denomination that can be identified individually was the Catholic Church as shown below:

Denomination Group	Denomination Names	Frequency 2001	Frequency 2006
Catholic	Catholic	1014	3157
Mainstream Protestant A	Anglican Uniting Church	2513	1956
Mainstream Protestant B	Lutheran Presbyterian	289	333
Large Protestant	Baptist Churches of Christ	885	770
Other Protestant	Reformed Congregational Vineyard Fellowship Christian and Missionary Alliance Nazarene Brethren Seventh Day Adventist Independent	145	201
Pentecostal A	Christian City Church Apostolic Assemblies of God Christian Revival Crusade	309	503
Pentecostal B	Christian Life Churches Four Square Gospel Bethesda Other Pentecostal	7	4
Total		5162	6924

Because of the low numbers of respondents in the Pentecostal B group, all Pentecostal respondents (Groups A and B) were grouped together in the following analysis and discussion.

Age of Coming to Faith

Survey C, 2001	Age when first became a Christian								
	Under 5 years of age	5-9 years old	10-12 years old	15-19 years old	20-29 years old	30-39 years old	40-59 years old	60 years or over	Don't know/can't remember
Catholic	85.9%	5.5%	2.6%	1.0%	1.3%	1.4%	0.9%	0.7%	0.8%
Mainstream Protestant A	23.6%	15.3%	19.6%	16.6%	8.8%	5.4%	3.4%	1.1%	6.2%
Mainstream Protestant B	50.9%	9.0%	10.8%	10.4%	7.9%	3.2%	2.9%	1.4%	3.6%
Large Protestant	9.1%	18.9%	23.6%	20.8%	11.1%	6.8%	5.4%	1.1%	3.3%
Other Protestant	25.4%	10.4%	14.9%	18.7%	14.2%	5.2%	2.2%	0.7%	8.2%
Pentecostal	11.9%	17.5%	13.9%	15.9%	21.5%	9.6%	7.3%	0.3%	2.0%
Total	33.7%	13.7%	16.1%	14.0%	8.7%	5.0%	3.5%	1.0%	4.3%

At what age did people surveyed consider they came to faith? The vast majority of the Catholics (85.8%–85.6%) and Mainstream Protestant B (50.0%-50.9%) people became Christian before the age of 5 according to both surveys. This was also the age period when the largest number of Mainstream Protestant A people became Christians (26.9% & 23.6%) and Other Protestants in 2001 survey C (25.4%). Large percentages of people in the other three denominational groups also became Christians before 5, but larger percentages became Christians after this time period, up until the age beyond 19, when the coming to faith tapers off, except for a lower rate of tapering off for Pentecostals and to a lesser extent the Large Protestants.

The differences may be attributable to the different cultural meanings attached to the sense of "becoming Christian" in different sections of the Christian church. It might be that in the Catholic Church and the other denominations that registered large numbers of becoming Christians before the age of 5 (Mainstream Protestant B: Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, Mainstream Protestant A: Anglican and Uniting churches) the sense is identified with infant baptism. In contrast it may be that in the other churches that recorded a lower percentage of people becoming Christian before the age of 5 the sense of becoming Christian is understood more in the sense of a personal decision for Christ (Griffiths, 2009, pp. 154-155; Kling, 2014, pp. 599-602; Devenish, 2002, 169-170) whether at an early age or later in life. However, in either case it is apparent that, as Devenish (2002, p. 60) describes it, there is an entry into a Christian world-view which is characterised by 'Christ-centeredness, its call for an exclusive commitment, and its rejection of a self and world-centred concern in matters of morality and personal self-gratification, in favour of a life which is pleasing to God.'

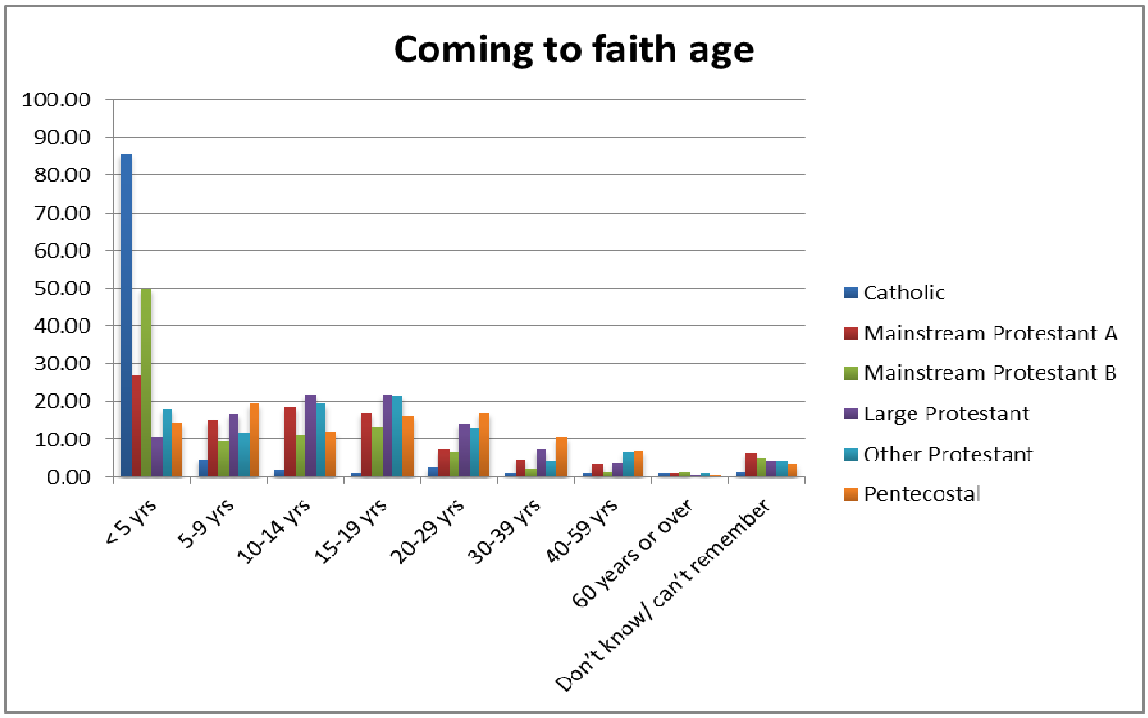
According to a survey of evangelical college students in UK from Baptist, Evangelical, Methodist, Anglican, New Church, Pentecostal and Presbyterian churches the overwhelming sense of coming to faith in Christ was that it was a 'process that deepens and matures as time passes' (Tidball, 2006, p. 88). 85% of these students had come to faith before the age of 25, but some of them indicated that they could not pinpoint their time of coming to faith and that they had faith as long as they could

remember (Tidball, 2006, pp. 88-89). Some similar patterns with regard to coming to faith could be expected to be seen in Australia, but at the same time because of the small size of the UK study and because it was conducted in a different country within a different denominational context it can only be expected to be weakly indicative of the Australian experience.

Thus it is not surprising that in the denominations that have a culture of emphasising both personal decisions with respect to salvation and subsequent baptism after such a conscious choice, e.g. Large Protestant grouping consisting of the Baptist and Church of Christ, and the Pentecostal churches, a lower number of "becoming Christian" events are attributed to the pre-5 year old age group. However, this conclusion needs some refinement, as for example Kay (2006, p. 117) found that the Pentecostal ministers in UK came to faith in two main ways. Those who were brought up in the same faith community churches as where they ministered now had came to faith gradually, whereas those who came from outside those church groups, had come to faith in a much shorter time, often through more dramatic conversions.

The main conclusion we can draw from this analysis is that in all the non-Catholic churches, the years before the age of 29 are critical in terms of people accepting the Christian faith, especially in terms of conscious personal conversions. The number becoming Christians beyond the age of 29 varies from 9.6% for the Mainstream Protestant churches to 20.8% for the Pentecostals. Thus, the vast majority of effective evangelism happens during the younger period of people's lives.

Figure 1 Age when became Christian in correlation to Denominations (Survey I, 2006)



Comparative Importance of Church Activities (evangelistic and educational) in Coming to Faith

What church activities have been found to be most important for coming to faith? The most important one was church services or mass (28.2% in survey C, and 36.9% in survey I), but three of the four most important coming to faith activities in the 2001 survey C were activities for children or youth, and of these the most important one was the Sunday school/Sabbath school or kid's club. 1208 of the 5162 attendees in 2001 indicated this as one of the two most important activities leading them to faith. This was 14.9% of all the responses to this question. Thus in terms of continuation of faith, the Sunday school is only second to the main church services as the means for developing living faith. In the 2006 survey I, the percentages of Sunday school and religious education (scripture at school) have changed positions, but are very similar in effect (11.9% vs. 13.1%). This again affirms the importance of both of these activities in developing youth spirituality and faith.

If we look at these figures a little more closely, we can see that more people came to faith through the children's and youth activities (35.4%) than due to church services themselves (28. 2%) according to the 2001 survey C. In the 2006 survey I the youth activities (32.9%) did not surpass the church services (36.9%) but again the combined youth activities were demonstrably important for evangelism and church education. These obser-vations suggest that we should invest at least as much, or perhaps even more effort, resources and time into children's and youth evangelistic, pastoral and educational work as we do into regular church services and adult evangelism.

Figure 2 Most important activities that led to faith (question 47, 2001 Survey C)

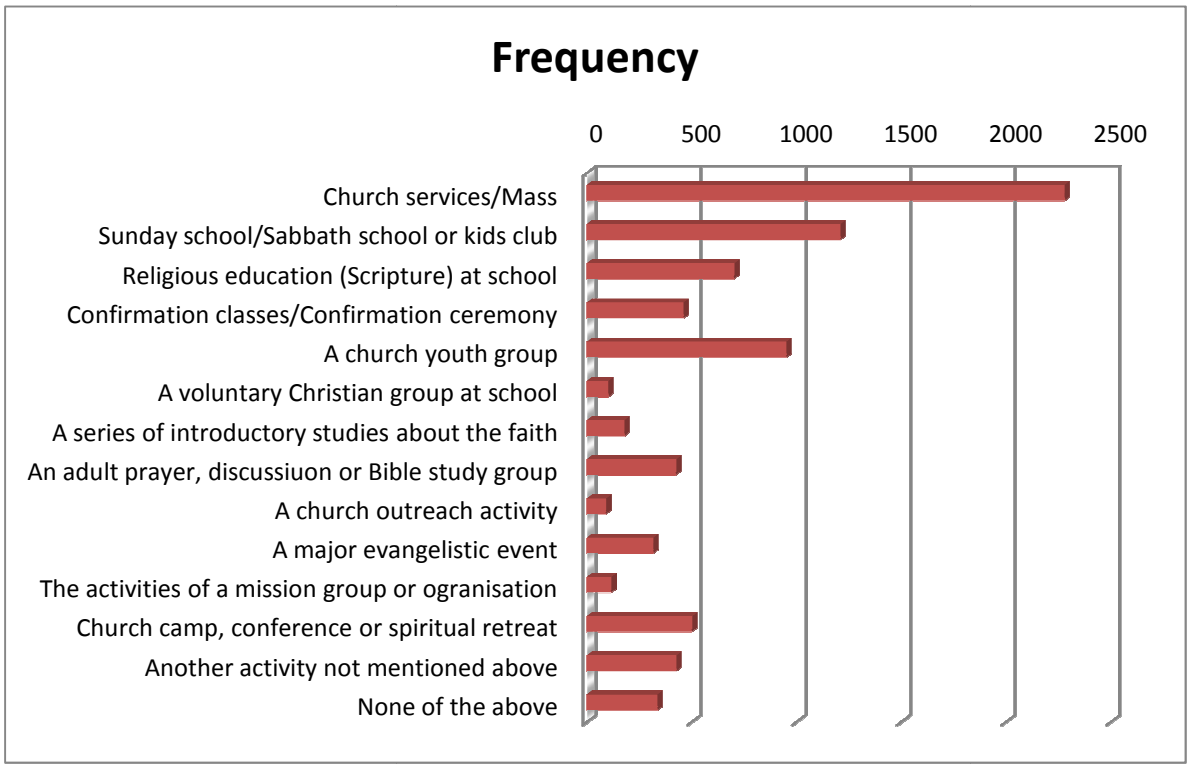
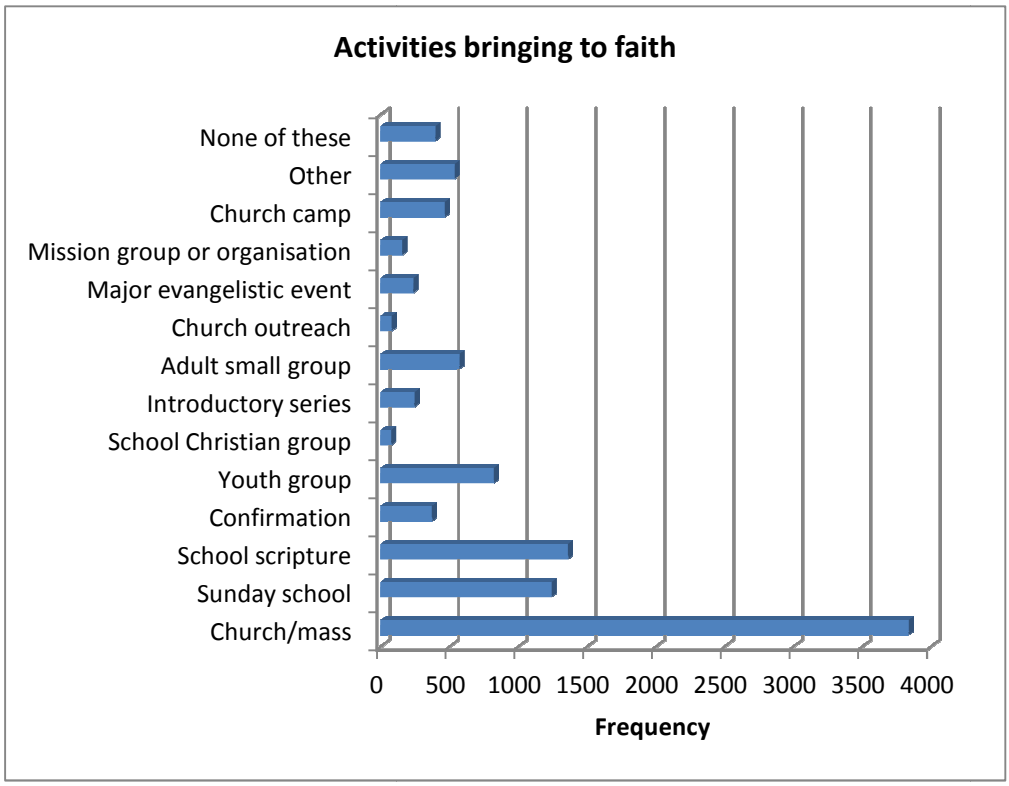


Figure 3 Most important activities that led to faith (question 42, 2006 Survey I)



Church Activities Leading to Faith and Denominations

Church Services and coming to faith

Church Services	Survey C, 2001	Survey, I, 2006
Catholic	77.2%	77.5%
Mainstream Protestant A	41.7%	44.6%
Mainstream Protestant B	47.6%	50.2%
Large Protestant	37.0%	39.2%
Other Protestant	48.9%	42.8%
Pentecostal	39.3%	49.3%

How did the various church activities compare among the different denominations in terms of bringing people to faith? The church services/mass activities were most important for the Catholic respondents, i.e. 77.2% (survey C) and 77.5% (survey I) vs. 48.9% and 47.6% (in survey C) for the next highest denominational groups (Other Protestant and Mainstream Protestant B) and 50.2% and 49.3% (Mainstream Protestant B and Pentecostal in survey I). There is not as much difference between the non-Catholic groups (about 12% difference between the largest and the smallest in survey C and 1% in survey I) as between the Catholics and the highest Protestant group (about 28% - 27%).

Sunday Schools and Denominations

Sunday Schools	Survey C, 2001	Survey I, 2006
Catholic	6.0%	6.0%
Mainstream Protestant A	30.5%	31.3%
Mainstream Protestant B	33.1%	31.4%
Large Protestant	29.8%	30.9%
Other Protestant	28.6%	23.7%
Pentecostal	19.0%	22.9%

In the case of Sunday schools, the situation with respect to church services is reversed. Sunday schools have been of significantly less value for Catholics to come to faith (6%) compared to non-Pentecostal Protestants, where 28.6% – 33.1% (survey C) and 23.7% - 31.4% (survey I) found Sunday School helpful in leading them to faith, i.e. a third or just under Protestants found Sunday schools helpful in coming to faith. The Mainstream Protestant A and B groups and Large Protestant groups found the Sunday schools of the greatest value in coming to faith compared Other Protestant groups, and of the Pentecostals only 19% (survey C) to 22.9% (survey I) found Sunday school an important factor leading them to faith.

Youth Groups and Denominations

Church youth groups	Survey C, 2001	Survey I, 2006
Catholic	7.2%	4.8%
Mainstream Protestant A	22.2%	19.0%
Mainstream Protestant B	18.5%	14.0%
Large Protestant	26.6%	20.9%
Other Protestant	27.1%	16.0%
Pentecostal	18.3%	20.7%

The comparison of youth groups and denominations shows a similar pattern to the Sunday school vs. denomination comparison. For the Catholic population youth groups were significantly less important in coming to faith as for the Protestants (including the Pentecostal group). That is 7.2% (survey C) and 4.8% (survey I) for the Catholics, compared to 18.5 – 27.1% (survey C) and 14.0% to 20.9% (survey I) for the Protestants found them important. According to survey C the Mainstream Protestant A, Large Protestant and Other Protestant groups gained a significantly better value from youth groups than the rest. However, according to survey C the three largest beneficiaries from youth groups were the Large Protestant, Pentecostal and the Mainstream Protestant A groups.

Religious Education at School vs. Denominations

Religious Education at School	Survey C, 2001	Survey I, 2006
Catholic	42.8%	37.2%
Mainstream Protestant A	9.8%	9.4%
Mainstream Protestant B	8.7%	11.1%
Large Protestant	5.7%	5.8%
Other Protestant	6.0%	5.7%
Pentecostal	5.1%	4.9%

The results of the denominational analysis of the value of religious education in schools shows that a much larger number of the Catholic respondents found it helpful in bringing them to faith than the Protestant respondents, who found it helpful in mostly less than 10% of the cases. There was a small amount of variation among the Protestant denominations as far as the value of religious education in schools was concerned, but overall most of them found it of significantly less value compared to the Catholics.

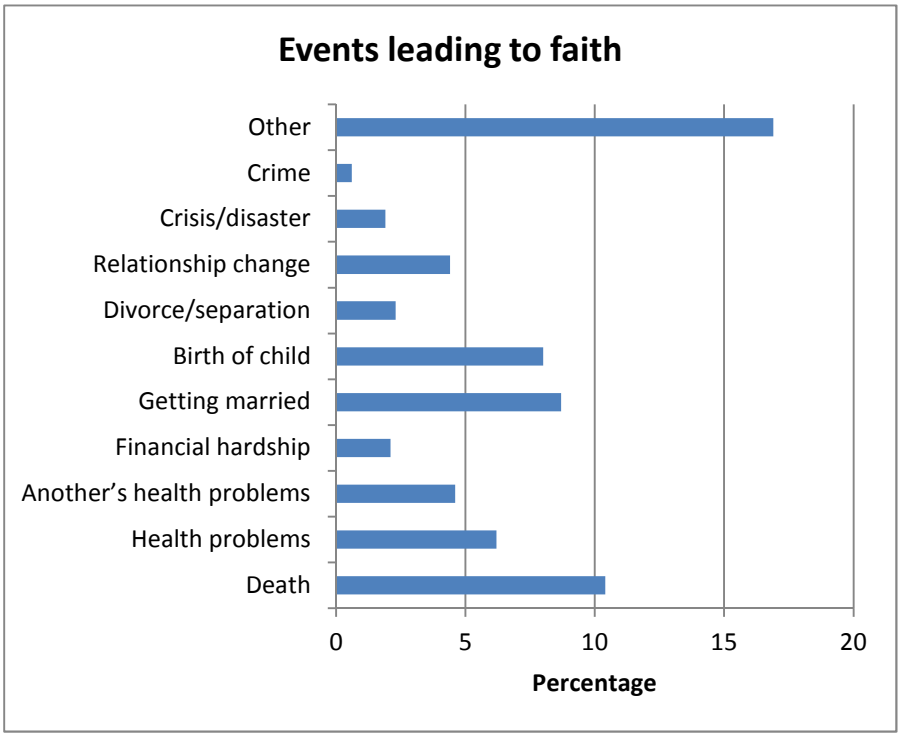
So in summary, the Catholic respondents found church services or mass, and religious education in schools most useful in bringing them to faith, 77.% (survey C), 77.5% (survey I) and 42.8% (survey C) 37.2% (survey I), whereas the Protestants on the average found church services useful about 43% (survey C) to 45% (survey I) of the time and religious education in schools 7% (survey C and I) of the time in bringing them to faith. Sunday schools and youth groups had low value for Catholic respondents in bringing them to faith, 6% (survey C and I) and 7.2% (survey C) to 4.8% (survey I), but for the Protestants (including the Pentecostals) on average Sunday schools were helpful for 28% (survey C) to 23% (survey I) and youth groups were helpful in bringing to faith about 22% (survey C) to 18% (survey I) of the people. The substantial benefit of religious education in school for Catholics may indicate the value of church-based schooling proportionately more Catholics have accessed than Protestants.

Comparative Importance of Significant Events for Coming to Faith

Question 43 in 2006 survey I explores the significance of particular events for coming to faith. The results for this question are presented below (responses came from 5977 people).

It appears that particular specific events in people's lives only led them to faith up to about 10% of the time maximum. The most important event is *death* with significance for 10. 4% of the people. The next most important events are happy events, *getting married* at 8.7% and the *birth of a child* at 8.0%. *Health problems* are next most important, both *one's own* at 6.2% and *others' health problems* at 4.6%. A *relationship change* is approximately as important as others' health problems at 4.4%. The final identified issues are *crisis/disaster* at 1.9% and *crime* at 0.6%.

Figure 4 Most important events that led to faith (question 43, 2006 Survey I)



Events Leading to Faith and Denominations

The four most important events leading to faith in survey I were death, getting married, birth of a child and health problems. Examining these along denominational lines gives us useful information.

Denomination	Death	Health problems	Getting married	Birth of child
Catholic	13.3%	6.9%	12.0%	11.6%
Mainstream Protestant A	9.3%	6.7%	7.4%	7.7%
Mainstream Protestant B	11.2%	3.8%	9.1%	6.3%
Large Protestant	5.4%	4.0%	3.4%	2.4%
Other Protestant	4.3%	6.4%	5.3%	1.6%
Pentecostal	7.9%	4.8%	4.4%	1.9%
Total	10.4%	6.2%	8.7%	8.0%

A very similar pattern was maintained for all the denominations, with death being the most important factor in coming to faith for all but Other Protestants (4.3%) where health problems (6.4%) and getting married (5.3%) were rated more important. The Catholics experienced the greatest effect due to events leading them to faith among all the denominations, i.e. 13.3% for death, 6.9% for health problems, 12.0% for getting married and 11.6% for the birth of a child. The next largest effect due to death was on Mainstream Protestant B population (11.2%) and the weakest effect of death was on Other Protestant at 4.3%. The next largest effect to Catholics for health problems was Mainstream Protestant A (6.7%) and weakest was Mainstream Protestant B at 3.8%. The next strongest effect of getting married was on Mainstream Protestant B (9.1%) and the weakest was on Large Protestants (3.4%). The next strongest effect of birth of a child after Catholics was on Mainstream Protestant A (7.7%) and the weakest effect was on Other Protestants (1.6%).

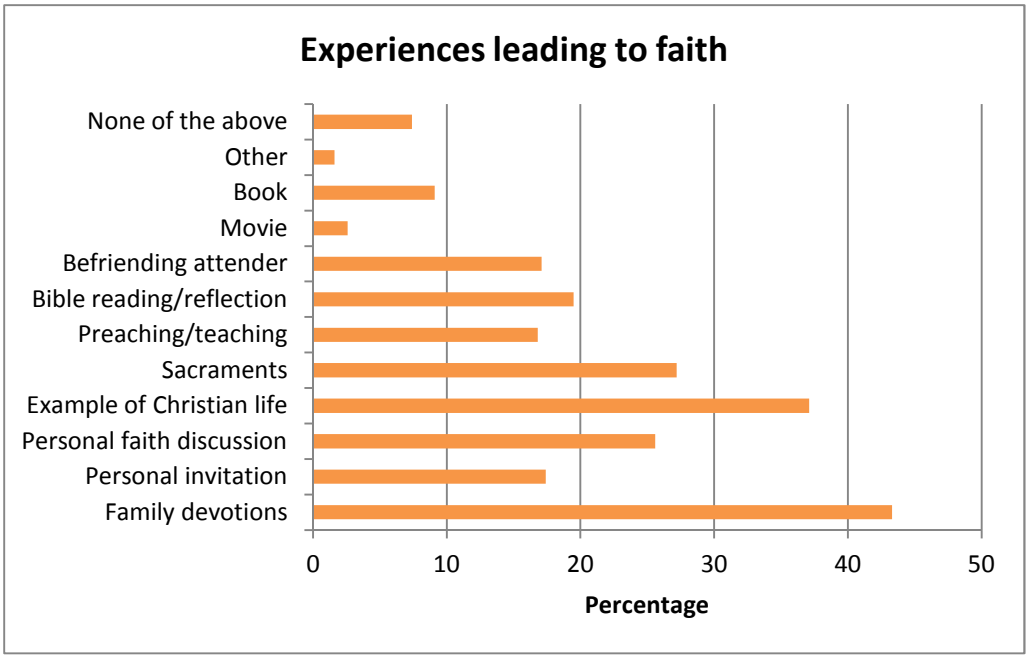
Comparative Importance of Significant Experiences for Coming to Faith

What was the comparative importance of significant experiences on coming to faith? Question 44 in 2006 survey I explores the significance of particular experiences for coming to faith. The results for this question are presented here (responses came from 6390 people). The most important experiences that led to Christian faith were:

Family devotions	43.3%
Example of Christian life	37.1%
Sacraments	27.2%
Personal faith discussion	25.6%

The weakest identified experiences were movies (2.6%) and books (9.1%). The other experiences were of mid-range importance, i.e. Bible reading/ reflection (19.5%), Personal invitation (17.4%), befriending attender (17.1%) and preaching/ teaching (16.8%). Most, but not all, of the important experiences were *relational* rather than *formal* church activities (sacraments and preaching/teaching) or *impersonal* ways of communicating the faith (Bible reading/reflection, books and movies). This observation echoes the message of Devenish in his paper to the 2013 Harvest Research Conference called "The Evocation of Saints: believers in a post-Christian age," where he argued that the most important aspect of evangelism is the godly quality of the lives of Christians (Devenish, 2013).

Figure 5 Most important experiences that led to faith (question 44, 2006 Survey I)



Church Activities Leading to Faith and Denominations

How does the importance of the church related activities that led people to faith vary among the denominations? The family devotions were clearly most beneficial for the Catholics (58.8%), with the Mainstream Protestant B group gaining the next amount of benefit from them (41.9%) but then the value of the devotions reduced to around 30% for the remaining denominational groups.

Personal invitations were most beneficial among the Pentecostal denominations (30.0%), followed very closely by the Other Protestant groups (27.9%) and Large Protestants (25.7%). For the Mainstream Protestant groups A and B there was even less benefit from these experiences in coming to faith (21.5% and 18.1%). Finally the Catholics had the least benefit (9.6%) in coming to faith due to personal invitations.

The personal faith discussions were most beneficial for the Other Protestants and Pentecostals (43.1% and 42.9%). The group that gained the next greatest benefit from personal discussions was the Large Protestant group (36.5%), followed by the Mainstream Protestants A and B (29.5% and 25.2%). However, just as for personal invitation experiences, the Catholics benefitted the least from personal faith discussions in terms of coming to faith (16.0%).

Denominational group	Family devotions	Personal invitation	Personal faith discussion
Catholic	58.8%	9.6%	16.0%
Mainstream Protestant A	29.2%	21.5%	29.5%
Mainstream Protestant B	41.9%	18.1%	25.2%
Large Protestant	29.8%	25.7%	36.5%
Other Protestant	32.5%	27.9%	43.1%
Pentecostal	32.4%	30.0%	42.9%

The example of Christian life was fairly evenly important in all the non-Catholic denominations, with the greatest effect being in the Large Protestant denominations (47.4%), whereas the rest of these denominational groups clustered close to 43%. However, the example of Christian life was of least benefit in the Catholic church (28.2%). In terms of importance of sacraments for coming to faith it is clear they were most important for the Catholics (45.6%) and the next most important for the Mainstream Protestant B and A denominations (21.3% and 16.9%). The importance for rest of the denominations clustered around the 5-6%.

Denominational group	Example of Christian life	Sacraments	Preaching/teaching
Catholic	28.2%	45.6%	8.2%
Mainstream Protestant A	43.7%	16.9%	21.8%
Mainstream Protestant B	42.9%	21.3%	28.1%
Large Protestant	47.4%	5.0%	27.8%
Other Protestant	42.6%	5.6%	22.3%
Pentecostal	42.7%	5.7%	21.5%

Preaching and teaching was most beneficial for the Mainstream Protestant B and Large Protestant groups (28.1% and 27.8%). The next groups who gained nearly the same level of benefit from preaching and teaching were the Other Protestants, Mainstream Protestant A group and the Pentecostals at approximately 22% level. The Catholics gained the least benefit from preaching and teaching for coming to faith (8.2%).

There was a range of responses to the value on Bible reading and reflection of ranging from a high of 31.3% for the Mainstream Protestant B group to a low of 11.5% for the Catholics. For more than 22% of all non-Catholics Bible reading and reflection was helpful for coming to faith, which was more than 10% above the value of this experience for the Catholics (11.5%).

All but the Mainstream Protestant B group of the non-Catholics found that in over 20% of the cases when someone attending a church made friends with them, it led them to faith. These beneficial experiences occurred in a narrow band between a high of 24.3% (Pentecostals) to 21.3% (Other Protestant). The Catholic attenders had benefitted in terms of coming to faith from someone attending a church making friends with them only to the extent of 9.6% and in the Mainstream Protestant B group only 18.1% benefitted from attenders befriending them.

Out of all the experience categories identified as being beneficial for coming to faith movies had the least impact. However, the Pentecostals (4.3%) and Catholics (3.5%) experienced the greatest benefit. Everyone else apart from Other Protestant (2.5%) gained less than 2% benefit from movies in terms of bringing them to faith.

Denominational group	Bible reading/reflection	Befriending attender	Movie
Catholic	11.5%	9.6%	3.5%
Mainstream Protestant A	24.7%	23.6%	1.4%
Mainstream Protestant B	31.3%	18.1%	1.9%
Large Protestant	27.8%	23.3%	1.6%
Other Protestant	28.4%	21.3%	2.5%
Pentecostal	22.5%	24.3%	4.3%

Two denominational groups gained the most in terms of coming to faith from books, Pentecostals (11.5%) and Mainstream Protestant A (11.3%). All the rest of denominations were somewhere in between a high of 9.1% (Other Protestant) and a low of 6.5% (Mainstream Protestant B).

Denominational group	Book
Catholic	7.6%
Mainstream Protestant A	11.3%
Mainstream Protestant B	6.5%
Large Protestant	8.9%
Other Protestant	9.1%
Pentecostal	11.5%

Conclusion

It appears that the meaning of coming to faith varied among the different denominations. Some appeared to view it as synonymous with infant baptism, whereas others regarded it more as an evangelical conversion experience which would take place at an older age when people could make deliberate choices for themselves (Tidball, 2006, pp. 92-9; Kling, 2014, pp. 602-604). It would appear that there are major cultural differences in these perspectives, which are also associated with distinctive rites and celebratory characteristics in the different denominations, and also tensions which have required various forms of accommodation, such as the availability of 'believer's baptism' for those who came to personal faith after infant baptism (Kling, 2014, p. 603). However, the inescapable observation emerges in this context that *most people come to faith at an early age*. This underscores the importance of providing Christian evangelism to the young, as well as the vital importance of Christian nurture and education which include deliberate and explicit evangelistic dimensions.

This is also underscored by the findings on the most important activities that led people to faith. A significant proportion of them were aimed at the youth, such as *Sunday school*, *religious education* and *church youth groups*. However, the one church provided activity that was of the most benefit for all ages in coming to faith was the *church service* or *mass*. It was far more important than all the camps, missions, evangelistic events, small group events, etc.

It was evident from the results that life events had fairly minimal effect of people coming to faith. *Death* seemed to be the most important event that caused some people to come to faith. This was also noted by Tidball (2006, pp. 88, 97-98) for a small number in his sample in the UK.

The value of various experiences in bringing people to faith varied markedly between different denominations, i.e. in other words there are cultural differences in the way different churches provide and focus on different activities for faith formation, and their effects vary between the churches. It would appear that those denominations who do not receive much benefit from particular experiences for faith formation might reconsider *how* they deploy particular experiences to people whom they wish to encourage to come to faith. For example, all the non-Catholics might reconsider the value of *family devotions* and *sacraments*, and what is the cultural value and cultural approach to these activities in their church communities. On the other hand the Catholics might learn from the Protestants about their culture of emphasis on value of *personal invitations*, *personal faith discussions*, the *examples of Christian lives*, *preaching*

and teaching, *Bible reading* and *reflection*, and making opportunities for those outside the faith to *befriend church attenders*.

Movies and books appear to provide very little significant influence on people to assist them to come to faith, but the movie materials and methods used by Pentecostals and Catholics are a little more effective than the other denominations. Similarly the books and methods of their use by Pentecostals and Mainstream Protestant A church groups are more successful than the other denominations, and could help the others to learn from these examples of best practice.

So in summation, there are empirically identifiable cultural differences in the way churches approach evangelism, spiritual education and faith formation in their communities. Some of these characteristics have been identified in this paper, suggesting improvements all churches could adopt from the cultural practices of others.[1]

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Visual Technologies within a Consumerist Culture.

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Abstract

The use of visual technology is now a familiar medium of communication in most churches across New Zealand and Australia. Its accessibility and effectiveness in branding has had wide appeal especially to those leading large churches, who are eager to promote their identity, enlarge the size of their existing congregation(s), and expand influence within a consumerist–culture of lifestyle choices. Large Pentecostal churches are some of the most adept at utilising and absorbing these visual technologies, and do so, to great effect. This creates a level of vulnerability within Pentecostalism which largely goes unnoticed – the hidden absorption of a consumptive way of being. The pragmatism of its leaders to be relevant within this culture creates its own blind-spot. This quest for relevance tends to negate the need for theological critique and a robust process by which to evaluate various visual technologies thus allowing elements of secularity the scope to shape and re-shape congregational identity.

In this paper I discuss to what extent these visual technologies (an aberration of contemporary culture) are shaping a Pentecostal ecclesia and the behavioural patterns of its participants. A brief explanation of how images work is offered. This is followed by a case study of East Auckland Elim Christian Centre (EE) and its use of visual technologies. (EE is one of the largest churches in Auckland). The paper argues that while EE is very effective in communicating its identity and vision, its absorption of visual advertising practices (and thus of popular culture) makes it susceptible to the secular forces that run counter to the gospel, and may even in time, undermine the integrity of its own vision.

Introduction

Motivation for this research developed out of a concern about the adoption and absorption of sophisticated advertising techniques that were being used by large Churches to attract members. I was interested to learn to what extent the use of visual technologies might be having on Pentecostal congregations, and, to what the extent this influence might be having on the Christian identity of congregants and congregational life more widely.

I had a suspicion that the prolific use and adoption of visual technologies might actually be shaping congregants in ways that were contrary to the gospel. That is, at a deeper level, the message of slick advertising and hi-tech sophistication might be (in)forming congregants to be better consumers rather the better Christian disciples.

Research Methodology

My methodological approach draws upon Hedi Campbell's work, *When Religion Meets New Media*, which investigates the reactions of a variety of religious groups to the introduction of new forms of media into their communities and lives of faith (Campbell 2010). Her book suggests a different starting point, one that considers "religious individuals and communities as active, empowered users of new media who make distinctive choices about their relationship with technology in light of their faith community history, and contemporary way of life" (Campbell 2010). Campbell's work goes some way in offering a helpful tool by which to access Pentecostal congregations and the extent to which they may monitor their use of, and engagement with, new forms of media. I make use of Campbell's "four stages framework" (p. 188-189) as a tool to gain a greater understanding of a particular Pentecostal ecclesia: its history and tradition, core values and patterns, negotiation process, and the communal framing and discourse around its use of technology. The sample given in this essay is of a large Pentecostal church located in the eastern suburbs of Auckland. This church identifies itself as Elim Christian Centre – East (EE).

The research approach is qualitative and is comprised of a series of observations and interviews. EE's building decor and property, along with four services on a given Sunday are observed. From these observations, nine significant images were selected. This was followed up by an interview process involving sixteen interviews done in two cycles. The first cycle included the senior (and founding) pastor, the senior associate pastor, a retired elder, and the design team. The nine images, gathered from the observation process, were used in the second cycle of interviews. In this cycle ten congregants were interviewed inclusive of a focus group of four people (of varying age, gender and ethnicity). The data was analysed by employing various techniques. These techniques included noting patterns, seeing plausibility, clustering, counting, making comparisons, building a logical chain of coherence and making conceptual/theoretical coherence (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

Research Rationale

The argument for examining Pentecostal churches over other denominations is guided by the following three considerations.

Firstly, Pentecostal congregations in New Zealand Aotearoa today are amongst some of the biggest and most visible churches in the country. This reality was inconceivable fifty years ago (Knowles 2006) when mainline churches enjoyed a loyal constituency of followers (Davidson & Lineham 1987). Belonging was built upon a

participant's loyalty to his or her religious tradition despite geographic inconvenience and personal preference. This religious scenario has long since been replaced by a new social posture. Loyalty and belonging now take their cue from a visually sensitised culture of advertising and an individual's freedom to choose. It is within this context that religious fervour and popular culture have in many ways converged.

Secondly, Pentecostals' readiness to identify with, adapt, and absorb culture are characteristics that shape its peculiar ethos in any given context. Harvey Cox (1995) poignantly observes that "Pentecostalism has the same uncanny capacity to be at home anywhere. It absorbs possession in the Caribbean, ancestor veneration in Africa, folk healing in Brazil, and shamanism in Korea. But everywhere it remains recognisable as Pentecostalism." He goes on to say that "Pentecostalism's phenomenal power to embrace and transform almost anything it meets in the cultures to which it travels is one of the qualities that give it such remarkable energy and creativity" (p. 147-148). It should not be surprising to find that Visual Technology in its various forms, from hi-tech multi-media devices to professional graphic designers, is now an intrinsic part of what one may experience when entering a large Pentecostal church. The readiness to adopt visual technology by the tradition is arguably a logical contextualisation of a more general and global trend towards a visual culture (Sturken & Cartwright 2009).[1]

Thirdly, this capacity on the part of a Pentecostal ecclesia to absorb elements of its host culture taps another axiom of self-understanding: relevance.[2] The desire to be contemporary and have a relevant message flows out of historical themes that have given shape to Pentecostalism since its beginnings (Flett 2011). At play within the tradition is the imperative of mission which in the New Zealand context carries the posture of needing to be relevant. Not surprisingly, the familiar tag-lines of "being relevant" and "being contemporary" have emerged as influential texts within the tradition. This is particularly evident over the last twenty years when both tag-lines have been regularly used by Pentecostal groups to promote their identity. This is in part an attempt to attract new members. The language itself may carry significance in understanding the attitude of larger Pentecostal churches towards visual technologies and their apparent eagerness to keep in step with what the marketplace has to offer. Moreover, the readiness of a Pentecostal congregation to use visual media to create cultural capital and gain ground may offer insight into the logic and trajectory of a movement, which because of its particular priorities and commitments may make it permeable to the influences of consumer culture (Dunn 2008).[3] This is because they quickly adopt technology as a relevant and an effective means to communicate their identity and get their message out into the public domain.

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[1] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright acknowledge the dominant role that visual and communication technologies now have in a globalised world. They state: "Our lives are increasingly dominated by the visual and by communication technologies (both wired and wireless) that allow for the global circulation of ideas, information, and politics" (p.1).

[2] Linda Flett states: "[B]etween 1990 and 2008, [Assemblies of God New Zealand and the Elim Churches of New Zealand] demonstrated their commitment to relevance. Elim moved early in this period to embrace fresh methodologies and sought to keep pace with changing attitudes. However, the extent to which new ideas were embraced [by both Elim and Assemblies of God New Zealand] was subject to a much deeper commitment to the Great Commission and to be 'Spirit led" (Flett 2011, p. 73).

[3] Robert Dunn defines consumer culture by stating that "[It] consists of a system of meanings, presentations, and practices that organise consumption as a way of Life. Consumerism, in contrast, is an ideology that seductively binds people to this system" (2008, p. 8)

In view of these considerations, we will now briefly explore contemporary culture and the significance of images within this contextual frame.

Contemporary Culture and the Significance of Images

To speak of contemporary culture in New Zealand is to acknowledge the dominant narrative of a capitalist consumerism that fundamentally shapes the corporate and individual identities of those living in Western societies (Dunn 2008). Advanced capitalist societies like New Zealand operate on a matrix of deeply-held assumptions that orient human identity around an individualised view of self. This self is fully realised when, and to the extent, an individual is able to imbibe the consumptive ideals of a capitalist society and be in a position to consume. Dunn (2008), speaking out of a North American context, states that "deeply rooted in the profit motive, consumerism is now a widely shared ideology and worldview capable of creating strong attachments to consumption as a way of life, based on a belief in the enduring power of material possessions and commercial distractions to bring happiness and fulfilment" (p. 8). This form of capitalism perpetuates the myth of consumer choice and promotes the idolisation of desire. In this respect consumer culture "consists of a system of meanings, representations and practices that organise consumption as a way of life" (Dunn 2008, p. 8). The significance of choice in our desire, want, or need, to be contemporary raises the issue of subjectivity and the intriguing problem of insatiability. This describes the cultural logic of contemporary culture, a logic that transforms the inherited frameworks of moral meaning and social obligation. "To be contemporary" then may give assent to a particular posture that identifies with the latest fashion or technology, and gives impetus to a consumptive disposition.

Some of the key issues that arise from this socio-cultural context are crucial to note. I have identified five that signal concern for societies like New Zealand (who are wedded to a consumptive way of life).

The first of these is the systematic arousal of consumer desire. This features in the festive and day-to-day rhythms of contemporary culture itself.[4] It is also celebrated in the increasing ease and accessibility of commodities. Moreover, desire itself has become a product, an object to be manipulated. In a capitalist economy like New Zealand, much depends on the market's ability to over-produce goods while simultaneously producing within consumers the desire to purchase those goods.

Secondly, and related, is the power and the triumph of advertising. The role advertising plays in a consumptive culture cannot be overstated. Advertisements evoke allusions of promise and abstract worlds, which are "situated in the present but in an imagined future" (Sturken & Cartwright 2009). The promise of a better self-image, a better appearance, or more prestige, all create a feeling of dissatisfaction. This is at the heart of the advertising industry. Sturken and Cartwright (2009), reflecting on the work of Jacques Lacan, speak of desire and lack as central motivating forces in our lives. They go on to argue that "it is this drive to fill our sense of lack that allows advertising to speak to our desires so compellingly" (p. 278). Their perspective raises concerns about the ways advertising is utilised by church organisations in the promotion of their identity and life, which will be explored later in this essay.

[4] "Boxing day" sale promotions and other public-holiday promotions are examples of commercialism and consumptive rhythms taking root in popular culture.

The third issue is the influential role media and advertising images play in how we see ourselves. Closely tied to advertising is the issue of identity. In recent academic discourse, there is a general consensus that consumption and consumer culture are now a focal point of identity formation in advanced societies (Dunn 2008). No longer is identity based upon inherited, externally imposed systems of beliefs and values, but rather upon an individual's effort, will and self-interest in establishing their own place within society. To this extent, the embrace or evasion of particular material possessions, appearances, or even experiences have increasingly become the commodity/sign of various codified and individualised modes of identity. "[These] lifestyle identifications serve not only as means of social and cultural placement as dictated by the semiotic codes of status, but also as vehicles of self-expression and fulfilment" (Dunn 2008, p. 188). Advertising has thus played a significant role in re-shaping public imagination, eroding the hold of traditional and conventional affiliations while strengthening new definitions of self and others around material possessions and lifestyle.

Individualism is yet another issue nurtured by consumerism. The development of economic individualism and 'free market' capitalism has created a binary opposition within culture between 'winners' and 'losers', between the 'successful' and the 'unsuccessful', between those 'in' and those 'out'. Consumerism has created an ethos of competitiveness (Dunn 2008). At a structural level, this causes ever-increasing levels of social fragmentation and isolation.

The fifth issue to emerge is the social dislocation and the psychological disconnectedness of people. The market's dependence on ever-changing styles and fashion destabilises identity. This perpetuates a sense of dislocation and distance about one's own existing space, yet at the same time heightens the possibility of something new, promising pleasure, fulfilment and reconnection. The disposal of 'the old' for 'the new' expressed in various forms, even in churches, has given rise to the elevation of novelty and the degradation of routine. Bauman names this aptly in stating that "being bored, in addition to making one feel uncomfortable, is turning into a shameful stigma" (Bauman 2007, p. 130). The advertising industry plays a crucial role in cementing this myth. Its image-making apparatus constructs meaning that relationally bonds consumers not just with product (which is quickly displaced by a newer version) but with brand (Bauman 2007). This relationship is not just with material products but extends to services and, increasingly, the consumption of images, events and representations. The power to shape imagination in this respect is notoriously selective (Bauman 2007). It is guided by performance and a fanciful world of new experiences to be had.

In summary, 'to be contemporary' (within the New Zealand Aotearoa context) is to function within the cultural framework of an advanced capitalist society built on a consumptive way of life. This way of life is cluttered with advertising images and messages that confront us daily. Sturken and Cartwright (2008) make that point that "consumerism is deeply integrated into daily life and the visual culture of the societies in which we live in, often in ways we do not recognise" (p. 266). This is a significant point because a distinctive contour of contemporary culture is the prevalence of images and the role image-making plays in the communication of ideas and practices. Here, the lines separating visual culture and consumerism are blurred. This warrants an examination of consumerism in relation to its use of images.

Consumerism and the Use of Images

It is important to recognise that visual culture is the platform upon which consumptive ideologies disseminate. This is particularly evident in the realm of marketing where image-making has become the sharp edge of an effective retail industry. As images are not limited by the same conventions as words, their fluidity to penetrate culture and embed ideas is much greater. The genius of consumerism is in its ability to do just that – to create a fertile environment where people identify with what they see.

The most explicit use of image by consumerism is through the advertising industry and the way it is able to exploit temporal space. Through the use of images, assumptions about desire, what is novel, glamorous and pleasurable, and what is of beauty and of social value, are conceptualised, constructed and lived out in virtual worlds, digitally embellished to advance product participation and appeal. These perceived but fanciful realities have, as Sturken and Cartwright (2008) assert, "the power to conjure an absent person, the power to calm or incite to action, the power to persuade or mystify, [and] the power to remember" (p. 9). The continual advancement of imagining technologies have only served to further enhance the power of advertising. The extrapolation of human experiences via an image is not just the communication of ideas but the realised participation of virtual worlds where one enters momentarily and experiences a sense of gratification and pleasure.

Consumerism also uses image to commodify experience. Images are thoughtfully framed in an advocacy of ideas that promote a therapeutic discourse of self-improvement and individual wellbeing. They are used to comfort and create a sense of prestige, tradition and authenticity. In the context of advertising, images provide visual pleasure and sell the idea of belonging. Sturken and Cartwright (2008) observe that "[images of] ethnicity and race are used in advertisements to demonstrate social awareness and to give a product an element of cultural sophistication" (p. 278). This is particularly evident in the tourism industry where cultural sophistication is fleshed out in a host of commodified experiences. Each is codified by images depicting a virtual world of leisure and adventure. It is a package designed to evoke the imagination with thoughts of wellbeing that promise fulfilment and momentary escape from the routine of everyday life. In a similar manner but less explicit, religious experience has also become the object of consumption. Images of vibrant worship offer the possibility of transcendence, which serves as a gateway to salvation and an escape from the world and human limitation.

Images are not only used to commodify experience, but also to create cultural capital. Hunter (2010) argues that culture is not neutral in relation to power but a form of it. He states that "like money, accumulated symbolic capital translates into a kind of power and influence. But influence of what kind? It starts as credibility, an authority one possesses which puts one in a position to be listened to and taken seriously. It ends as the power to define reality itself" (Hunter 2010, p. 36).

One expression of this is the way in which images fabricate celebrity power and status. The importance and influence of a person is amplified when their image is projected through visual media and viewed by audiences in the public domain. This projection is an endowment that has the power to exaggerate importance and construct a public persona of credibility, even authority that gives power to the personality well beyond their temporal sphere of influence (Sturken & Cartwright 2008).

Given that images play a significant and crucial role in our lives, both shaping and framing the way we see the world, and given the symbiotic relationship that exists between what we see and how we respond to our environment, how do images actually work? In the broadest sense, images are bound within their given social and historical contexts where modes of meaning and interpretation are subject to those cultures out of which they are generated. Ironically, not only do images arise from culture, they can also shape culture. Several elements of how images work are worthy of consideration.

Firstly, images work by mediating meaning, and do so in a persuasive manner. Sara Morgan (2005) in a paper entitled *"More than Pictures? An Exploration of Visually Dominant Magazine Ads as Arguments"* contends that "consumers are doing more than emotionally responding to ads; they appear to be extracting basic arguments from them" (p. 146). This raises questions about the persuasive nature of images and structures of power that create, edit and deliver visual media. Moreover, it suggests that visual communication is neither passive nor neutral, but in fact active and persuasive, and in some cases deceptively seductive.

Secondly, and subsequently, images have persuasive power to influence human behaviour. This persuasive power is visible in rhetorical artistry of images. The semiotic notion of intertextuality means the boundaries of an image are permeable (Chandler 2012). By linking genres, images and text, new and ambiguous meanings become imbedded in the message structure. The orchestration of this becomes a powerful mechanism in the art of persuasion. Scholars argue that "intertextuality is a conscious encoding device employed by authors and producers to invite particular audience responses and attract certain viewers" (Otto & Walter, in Campbell & La Pastina (eds) 2010, p. 429). An example of this can be seen in the SmallGroup visual (figure 1.) developed and used by Elim Christian Centre - East (2012) when rebranding their small group ministry.

Figure 1

In a strategy to lightly entertain and dazzle viewers, the image demonstrates the use of a conscious encoding device. This device is called parodic allusion. The technique refers "to the incorporation into one text of a caricature, through imitation or exaggeration, of another. It offers no commentary on the original text. Rather, it seeks to amuse through juxtaposition – a goal that is enhanced by the reader's recognition of the parodic gesture (Otto & Walter, 2000, in Campbell & La Pastina (eds) 2010 p. 429-36). By stylising the image in a cartoon-like font and then juxtaposing it by embedding two capital fonts and then layering a tag-line below in capitals, the image is entertainingly ambiguous. The capitals are authoritative and commanding but are mockingly toned down by the larger more dominant un-capitalised (cartoon-style) font. The juxtaposition of both fonts creates a humorous banter within the image that carries with it a subtle invitation to join in the fun by participating in a group. The capital letters shout out, yet remain restrained by the light but ambiguous banter of the image itself. The faint background image of 'Burger Fuel' offers another narrative suggestion: LifeGroup offers fast-food sustenance for the soul.

Lastly, images re-distribute power. Kress (2010) highlights this challenge in voicing concern about the policing and control of this new language. He notes that once visual communication was spoken and developed in centres of high culture, but that "the dominant visual language is now controlled by the global cultural/technological

empires of mass media, which disseminate the examples set by exemplary designers and, through the spread of image banks and computer-imaging technology, exert a 'normalizing' rather than explicitly 'normative' influence on visual communication across the world"(Kress 2010, p. 5). This has resulted in the redistribution of power around the politics of style. This new map is about design that rests on the possibility of choice. In this environment, communication is dictated to by market-controlled principles of choice that call for individual discretion and entitlement. This leverages personal preference at the expense of those values that solidify a community. This is significant for religious communities and, in particular, I would argue those within a Pentecostal tradition. Moreover, if it is a high absorption of popular culture is a characteristic of Pentecostalism, does this make individual Pentecostal congregations vulnerable to the consumptive currents that swirl at will within the day-to-day market-driven context of daily life?

In response to this question the second half of this essay discusses data gathered from my research on Elim Christian Centre, (EE). The specific question in regard to this research was, to what extent are visual technologies shaping a Pentecostal ecclesia and the behavioural patterns of its participants? The material is arranged under two headings: Firstly, the organisation and its life, and secondly, congregant perceptions and the effect of visual technologies.

A Summary Discussion of the Research

The Organisation and its Life

Two reoccurring themes were noted when observing Sunday services and interviewing senior leadership and the design team: They were firstly, the energy and effort put into visual technology, and secondly, the fluid and overly casual structure in which those who direct EE's visual media function.

Energy and Effort: The energy and effort put into visual technology were firstly noted in the Sunday services. Each of the three services in morning were "seeker driven" and tightly managed. Visitors received promotional material and experienced a seamless flow of contemporary music and song, which was capped off with a positive message of hope. Each element seemed effortless. Three larger-than-life projector screens hung over the stage. They were alive throughout with digitalised images of the stage area: inclusive of the worship band, a superbly produced series of infomercials, and an informally dressed pastor as host. In addition, I noted three close-circuit wide flat-screen TVs strategically located towards the back of the auditorium; each ensuring congregants had stage visibility of the worship band, host and preacher. A sophisticated arrangement of lighting worked the stage area. This stepped up a notch when beams of coloured light pierced the white mist piping from a hidden smoke machine. Juxtaposed to these multi-sensory elements was the simplicity of the auditorium itself. The overall experience was impressive, entertaining and not out of sync with images encountered in common public spaces (e.g., viewed through TV/internet, at a rock concert or in a shopping mall).

The sophistication, preparation and expertise needed to construct this level of performance each week requires of the organisation a considerable commitment of its resources. This level of effort is well reasoned however, given EE's mantra towards unchurched people: "do whatever it takes to get people saved." This translates into methodologies where attracting people (both unchurched and churched) become a matter of executing the most effective techniques. In EE's arsenal of proven strategies is

impression management. However, EE's efforts to create an appealing public persona, does raise some concern as to the effects this may have upon congregants. The use of technology can and does reshape social behaviour. This is demonstrated by Heidi Campbell (2010) where she investigates various faith communities in relation to their use of new media. She argues that religious communities are shaped by technology but are not necessarily passive users – much depends on the kind of choices those communities make about new media. The accessibility of visual technology coupled with its power to persuade congregants arguably tips the balance of thinking and acting towards a more pragmatic approach to ministry. The language of congregational life is re-framed around practical impulses of "what works is good". As Paul Metzger (2007) observes, "In a free market church culture those who cater most to [the wants of consumers] thrive the best" (p. 40). This deepening reliance upon market methodologies to rally congregants subjugates the need for those practices that deeply form congregants in the virtues of the Christian tradition.

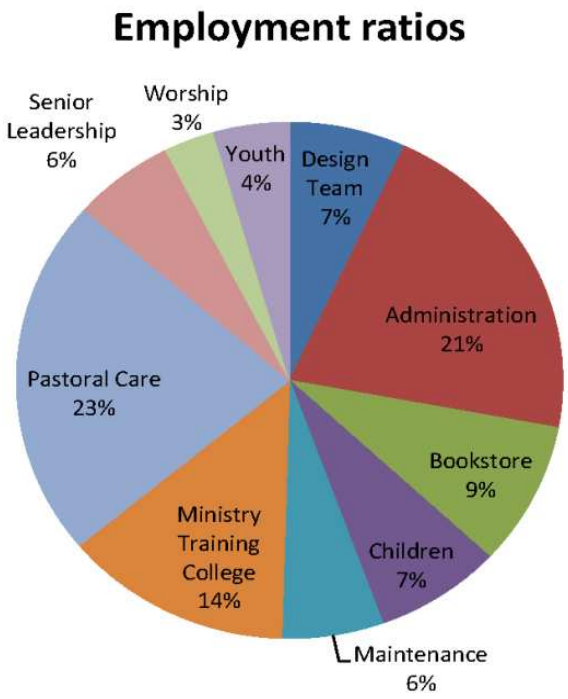
Also noted were the specialized staff and resources allocated to visual media. This consisted of two full time employed staff (FTEs), one with a Fine Arts degree and the other a degree in digital animation. An example of the expertise and sophistication observed is noted in the development of the 'LifeGroup' symbol (Figure 1.), and the energy that went into the actual image and then into the promotion of the image as a concept. The detail was revealing. Font shape, colour and background music were meticulously integrated to awaken the senses and persuade congregants to join a LifeGroup.

The interviews also indicated the effort expended to create the proliferation of graphic images, particularly in the way they communicate the character of the organisation: to be vibrant and dynamic, extensive, accessible, alive with activity, and memorable. No less than twenty five brochures, booklets and leaflets were displayed on the information stand that greets visitors on their arrival to the church. The literature promoting particular ministries was even more striking. Each had its own distinctive brand and, in some cases, carried a tagline. These images were replicated not only in hard copy on all forms of literature but in soft copy through a variety of digital mediums: website, DVD promotions and Sunday advertisement clips.

The proliferation of these images in their various forms demonstrates a commitment to work visual media, that is to ensure a level of novelty and freshness are constantly maintained. It could also be argued that these two elements – visual novelty and the need for freshness – are mutually inclusive. Each feeds off the other to create a combustible environment of activity. The sense of gratification is mutually shared. Congregants are energised by the visible choice of activities while the organisation is able to capitalise on their enthusiasm. This exchange increases the cultural capital of the organisation, enabling it to consolidate its identity and further promote its programs.

In EE's deployment of images, one reoccurring theme is evident: branding (Einstein 2007). The fingerprints of branding are evident across a whole range of EE's ministries. An example of this is the categorisation of age into specific groups. The logic is understandable as branding creates a memorable sign for consumers. They do not have to intentionally think about a product's attributes. As Einstein (2007) states, "the name or the logo appears and everything that is associated with that brand, comes to mind" (p. 12). The development of brands by EE has become an effective tool in the creation of specific identities. While income figures are outside the parameters of this research, a measurement of Full Time employee (FTE) ratios does give a glimpse of where the organisation is putting its energy (Table 1).

Table 1 Full Time Employment (FTE) Ratios



Process, Structure and decision-making: The second significant theme noted in regard to the organisation was the fluid and overly casual structure in which those who direct EE's visual media function. Two characteristics were evident. Firstly, a high level of level of pragmatism guided the inner logic of the organisation. The design team not only provided the graphic input but exercised visual discernment and decision-making discretion on image content, editing and the marketing of EE's identity and activities. The second (and subsequent) characteristic was influences of a secular nature which were unwittingly feeding into the organisation.

Secular influences framed the content and direction of EE's visual media. For the most part, these went undetected because they were nestled in the detail, camouflaged by the novelty of embracing the latest trend. This makes it difficult to unravel and name the unwanted element, because the lines between what is Christian and what is secular are often blurred by the use of technology. This is compounded further by a familiar discourse, which argues that "the means justifies the end," or the means is justified when its purpose is about achieving the greater good. For EE, reaching the unchurched and increasing church attendance is "the greater good". This goal is paramount.

The development of a branding guide by the design team is one such outworking. It is a comprehensive twenty-seven-page document that outlines and directs the visual landscape of EE. This is to ensure EE visual identity remains consistent and congruent with its corporate values and beliefs. Less reassuring, however, is the unmonitored discretion given to the design team in determining the suitability of an image. Of note in the branding guide is the statement, "God is constant but how God is represented can change with generations." The theological inference of this statement is significant and yet problematic. The design team become the church's freelance theologians who decide what images best represent God to the various groups.

This is expressed in the dichotomy made by the design team between internal and external images. If Christian images of any kind were to be used they were to be for internal viewing by a Christian audience over and against an external viewing by a non-Christian audience. Images deemed appropriate for external use were those considered to be plausible within the public domain – secular in nature. The reasoning behind this move is rooted deep in a desire to reach the "lost". This was voiced as, *"I would rather make sure I am hitting the mark for the unchurched person than another Christian."* It was a remark possibly guided by several underlying assumptions: 1) Christian images may work for believers but this is not our priority; 2) Christian images are not readily understood by those outside of the church; and 3) Secular images are relevant and effective tools to reach the unchurched. The force of these ideas coupled with EE's sense of purpose, means secular images are expedient, a logical choice. Expressed as "*We are not afraid to use whatever we can to make sure the message gets out."*

The influence of marketing theories and advertising practices were clearly evident in EE's visuals. These were observed in the navigational instruments used by the design team. They provided direction and ultimately underpinned many aspects of the design and delivery process. Embedded within these instruments are secular values and beliefs which, when used, call for certain epistemological commitments.

On a *functional* level the design team is able to excite congregants, even convince them to participate in EE's programs and activities with some certainty of success. However, at a *symbolic* level, given the absence of structures able to critically evaluate the shape and value-content of visual media, there is less certainty about the measurable effects of visual media upon congregant identity. Ever present is the possibility that other values and ideas contrary to those of the organisation escape notice and become embedded in the same visual promotion. The ambiguity that results creates a two-tiered message. At face value, the intent of the message is explicit, yet there lies at a deeper level more fluid messages about identity and consumer sovereignty. These more implicit messages are heard through the convergence of those themes, elements and connotations that surround and go into a visual promotion. Layered together, these ideas combine to signal a less obvious, but equally powerful, set of claims about Christian faith (e.g., the gospel is for those who are good looking and young, and being Christian is about being contemporary). These claims and others create ambiguity, which can be subversive. It is this subversive element I would argue goes unnoticed by EE and by those in leadership because the culture of the organisation, blinded by its own internal logic, does not appear to be conversant with the kind of processes needed to critically filter those values and beliefs that are contrary to its own and the gospel of Christ. While this internal logic offers pragmatic and strategic insights on visual media that are beneficial, it also makes EE vulnerable to corrosive elements of consumer culture, which may lie embedded within the actual practices and processes of the design team.

Congregant Perceptions and the Effects of Visual Technologies

In this element of the research, two themes were evident. The first is the positive vibe participants felt towards EE. This was particularly evident in the way advertising was able shape the imagination and point desire. An example of this was the way in which advertising was used to re-envision EE's small group ministry. As noted earlier, small groups were re-branded as LifeGroups. Its promotion effectively stimulated fresh interest and persuaded congregants to join up. Responses ranged from "I want to participate" to "Every time I see the LifeGroup ad I feel I need to get involved."

The second theme was the muted responses, which I have labelled as signs of dissonance. While the data highlighted the overall effectiveness of visual media and EE's employment of visual technologies, the data also revealed some dissonance towards aspects of their use. These responses included 1) feelings of incongruity and confusion around particular visual representations of identity; and 2) feelings of uncertainty-to-distrust around some visual presentations and their failure to deliver on the claims that had been made.

Feelings of incongruity and confusion were expressed when interviewees were shown the front page of EE's website and an image representing EE as a multi-ethnic and inter-generational church community. All acknowledged the validity of the image as a true representation of EE. However, each interviewee voiced a degree of incongruity about the stock photos used in the visual.

Feelings of uncertainty and distrust were expressed around some of the advertising that was loaded with visual imperatives claiming certain outcomes. Concern was expressed that some claims were exaggerations of reality while others were simply misleading. This raised questions of integrity for interviewees concerning EE, who saw a gap between the claims made and reality.

A more intense level of ambivalence surfaced when, in the focus-group interview, discussion broke out around the use of secular imagery and the use of Christian imagery. The kernel of the discussion centred on the appropriate setting of each. While participants strongly identified with the cross as an image, they were reluctant, even resistant, to using Christian images within a secular setting. A sharp dichotomy emerged around the appropriateness of secular images and inappropriateness of Christian symbols. The group argued that secular images were the most appropriate means of communicating the Christian message to those outside EE, while Christian imagery had a place inside the church.

This draws attention to the affective influence of images in the production of meaning. In this respect, the positivity of participants towards EE is a reciprocation of culture, a culture EE has promoted through its use of images. This is significant given that "communication is a quintessentially a social activity" (Kress 2010), which frames culture. Comments ranged from: "they just took stock images ... surely it would have been better if they had used people from the church" to "it's just a marketing ploy." Similar responses were repeatedly stated throughout. Some interviewees expressed confusion. One responded by saying "it bothers me that the images of people represented in this visual don't go to the church. It would mean more to me if I could identify the faces." Confusion seemed to compound around the ambiguity of the visual and its claim, especially in view of the inscription "You are invited" (which is located in the centre of the image) and its association with the photos. In other words, through visual media and the use of particular images EE is able to effectively (re)construct the social ground, the social relations and social environment according to its mandate. By choosing images and fashioning various modes of communication in ways that celebrate positivity, EE is able to create a plausible structure where positivity is a marker of belonging. This is not morally wrong, but it does raise questions about the formation of congregant identity and the process of communication as politically problematic (Kress 2010).

Another concern was the ambivalent attitude of interviewees towards Christian images. While all interviewees strongly identified with 'the cross' as a significant

Christian symbol, most felt EE's decision to use secular images over Christian images to market itself and promote its message to the wider community completely plausible. Moreover, it was felt Christian images would misrepresent EE in the marketplace on the basis that such images would likely be associated with traditional Christianity; something EE is keen to distance itself from in view of its commitment to "being contemporary." While, on the surface, this orientation seemed credible, it was not entirely consistent with views expressed by those interviewed. The ambiguity expressed in the notion that Christian images should be part of the inner life of the church, but not used outwardly when communicating with the public, is a perspective framed by a modernist narrative (Hiebert 2008).

This narrative (or modernist paradigm) was evident in the differentiation made by EE in regard to the plausibility of secular images over the implausibility of Christian images in the public domain; hence, the subjugation of Christian images for secular images. The result of this split upon those interviewed was a fragmented consciousness. On one hand, they felt Christian images were important for discipleship, but on the other hand were disposed to a dualism that relegated these images to one's private world of personal belief. While interviewees felt that Christian images were important, there was not a common language to speak of that expressed a communal belief in the Christian story, other than contemporary images EE used to communicate faith in the public domain. This loss undercuts the richness of the Christian story and its historical significance. Furthermore, it invokes a paralysis of congregant proclamation because there is not a shared language in which to speak about the mystery of the gospel in Christ. With the collapse of modernity and the emergence of postmodern themes, the relegation of Christian images to the margins seems misguided.

Conclusion

I have argued that the risk for Pentecostal congregations, such as EE, in adopting the strategies of the advertising world is that their congregations will end up adopting the values of the advertising world without knowing it is happening, (which is consistent with Torma & Teusner 2011). I have also argued that in the public domain of New Zealand, culture is driven by a consumptive vision framed by capitalist ideals in which advertising actively works on our imaginary world through its relentless promotion of compelling images pointing to a beautiful life; its gospel message is salvation by consumption.

The danger of this narrative for EE is that an embodied "know-how", is absorbed through the use of advertising techniques in the production of visual media. This potentially diminishes the significance of the Christian story and congregational life to commodified objects around which particular images have precedent over others. This is done by branding church life and practices (that are relationally configured) into specific objects emptied of their subjective value. These are marketed in increasingly sophisticated ways, so as to attract not just congregants but also an unchurched audience. Within this schema, anonymity and choice are assured, which are prerequisites of consumerist cultures. While these values might be something celebrated within popular culture, cultivating a congregant culture that indirectly promotes a social framework geared to consumer choice through advertising is less reassuring, especially when the desire of the organisation is unashamedly the proclamation of the gospel and an alternative way of life. This posture suggests EE is not fully aware of the host culture in which it seeks to reach, nor the degree to which the host culture itself may be influencing its own ecclesial identity and behaviour.

This is problematic for EE for a number of reasons. Firstly, the gospel cannot be reduced to market-size bits and allocated a consumptive value, especially if it is to challenge the beliefs of a consumerist system. Secondly, the Christian story loses its scope, as well as its capacity to re-tell its own story, if its language is flattened out to fit the prejudices of a cultural paradigm championing its own good-news message.

If I am right in arguing that language does matter in respect of a community's identity, it follows that the practice of Christian faith must remain faithful to its own linguistic structures. Such faithfulness does not mean cultural irrelevance but rather, in contrast, the creation and communication "of new signs that provoke people to think in new ways about ancient truth" (Downing 2012, p. 30.) If the gospel becomes confined to the smallness of the latest trend and advertorial images judged to be appealing, it risks losing its imaginary power for otherness; meaning Christian practices and virtues no longer appear other-worldly. The images used can only ever anticipate an imminent reality. This is because the transcendence of the message collapses into a world given to secular signs that are unable to grasp the eschatological significance of the gospel. Without a language and a "social imaginary" (Smith 2009, p. 65-66) to see and speak of Christian community as a people living in anticipation of God's kingdom in the present, Christian faith and its good-news story become prisoners to the surrounding culture.

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Journal of Contemporary Ministry

With the Curiosity of an Oddity from a Bygone Era: the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) conversation and its contribution to mission to the West.

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Abstract

The Western church inhabits a post-Christian context, which is just as significant a mission field as any from a non-Western background. Not realising this fact will cause the church to perpetuate paradigms of self-understandings and models of mission that do not fit this new reality, thereby draining the church's relevance for today. The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) have been addressing this issue for decades and the literature they have produced gives theological grounding for mission to the West. An exploration of their major tenets can help focus and reenergise the church's self-understanding and motivation for mission. The effects of one such church that has sought to apply one of the central motifs spurred by the GOCN conversation reveals the benefit of this deep theological reflection.

Introduction

Anyone who has presented a paper at a conference, or completed a lengthy assessment task or thesis, knows the blissful satisfaction of reading through it one last time, making the necessary changes, and hitting the "save" icon on whatever word processing software is used. Rarely, however, is that icon examined. The button that is used to "save" one's work represents a physical artefact which is no longer used in today's society – the 3.5 inch floppy disk. At one time, it was the preferred method of portable digital storage; holding a whopping 1.44 MB worth of information. Nowadays, one would be hard pressed to find a computer with a disk drive that could even receive

a 3.5 inch floppy, and the storage available on even the most basic of USBs or portable hard-drives makes the 3.5 inch capacity, laughable. These disks that were once ubiquitous, are now difficult to find – except those sold on ebay to collectors who are interested in technological yesteryear paraphernalia. In fact, most of this generation are completely unfamiliar with what this icon points to; according to one survey conducted with 1000 students from kindergarten to 5th graders, only 14% knew what the symbol actually meant (Kooser 2013).

The 3.5 inch floppy disc is perhaps an odd place to start this article, but it highlights the concept that even though forms of functionality evolve in life, (what was once useful, now no longer is), it is easy to get overly familiar with a form and fail to look at it through a critical lens.[1] The church at large has noticed that Western values and beliefs have evolved over the generations, yet seems to have forgotten to look at itself to gauge whether it may need to make any corresponding changes; in a way not too dissimilar to Microsoft continuing to use the 3.5 inch floppy as its "save" icon despite its functionality being long since succeeded.

The Western church inhabits a post-Christian context which is just as significant a mission field as any from a non-Western background. The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) have taken up the challenge to confront the church with this truth. This article then, is an attempt to engage with the literature produced by the GOCN, in order to give theological foundation to a missiological doctrine of the church and to prompt further discussion. A brief overview of the GOCN will begin this article, so as to place the network in historical perspective. It will then seek to identify the central motifs that have arisen in the GOCN's literature and why they are important for understanding the church's mission today. Finally, this article will reflect briefly on a local church that is seeking to live out one of these motifs in concrete ways. The ability to wrestle with these deep issues and allow them to shape Christian praxis is crucial if the church is to be faithful to its Lord, and its mandated mission and perhaps to counter the church being viewed with the curiosity of an oddity from a bygone era – much like a 5th grader looking at a floppy disk and wondering what its purpose might be.

An Introduction to the GOCN

"Can the West be converted?" Though many factors contributed to the genesis of the GOCN, that simple question asked by General Simatoupong of Indonesia at the World Council of Churches conference on World Mission and Evangelisation in Bangkok (1972-1973), was among the more significant. This question, heard in passing by British missionary statesman Lesslie Newbigin, echoed throughout his consciousness over the coming years and led him to ask what a genuine missionary encounter with Western culture would look like (Newbigin 1973, 1985).

Lesslie Newbigin

Newbigin was born in the UK in 1909. At the age of 27, along with his wife, he became a missionary to South India. For more than 3 decades Newbigin served in various roles as Pastor, seminary teacher and Bishop of the Church of South India. Upon his return to England in 1974, he was shocked to find "the 'Christian' England he had left as a young man had lost its Christian identity" (Zscheile 2011, p. xii), prompting him

[1] Kidman writes on his blog, "Even if an actual floppy is no longer the storage medium of choice, the familiarity of the icon ultimately becomes much more important than the original 'logic' behind choosing that symbol." (Kidman 2012)

to come out of retirement and engage afresh the irreligious context of Great Britain. The British Council of Churches requested that Newbigin, in consultation with other theologians and practitioners throughout the UK, prepare an essay to provoke discussion in their 1984 conference – *The Other Side of 1984* was the result. This essay, along with Newbigin's many other works – especially *Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986) – prompted much discussion and eventually led to the formation of the Gospel and Our Culture Programme; a collection of theologians and practitioners that sought to examine the question of what a missionary encounter with the British cultural context would look like. Their efforts sparked discussion in several locales throughout the Western world – such as South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia – but it was in North America and Canada that these discussions really caught alight.

The GOCN in North America

The "great new fact" of the late 80's and 90's was that the United States and Canada were not just postmodern, but increasingly post-Christian, and hence just as much a mission field as the lands outside of North America (Van Gelder 1996a, pp. 57-68). The church that once held much prestige and influence had been pushed to the margins of society, its status lost and voice muted (Van Gelder 1996b, p. 43). Like the Israelites in exile, those who had taken note of this situation had to re-examine their community's *raison d'etre*. This prompted several theologians and pastors to network together, take up Newbigin's gauntlet, and reflect on what these shifts meant, "under the light of the gospel, for the life and witness of the church" (The Gospel and Our Culture Network 2008).

This network began in 1987 and was coordinated by Dr. George Hunsberger, an ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church, Professor of Missiology at Western Theological Seminary and former missionary to East Africa. Hunsberger completed his PhD at Princeton Theological Seminary on Newbigin's theology of cultural plurality. He modified this work for the GOCN publication *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit*, which sought to provide a theological and theoretical framework for the church's missionary engagement with its culture (Hunsberger 1998, p. 8). By the early 1990's, the members of the network were convening once a year and a quarterly newsletter was being published (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011, p. 47).

Joining Hunsberger was Darrell Guder, also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, who had served in educational and pastoral positions in North America and Germany. Hunsberger invited Guder to work on a project he had recently obtained a grant for (Guder 2000, p. xii), and along with a team of four missiologists from diverse backgrounds (Lois Barrett, Inagrace Dietterich, Alan Roxburgh, Craig Van Gelder),[2] they produced the seminal work, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*.

Though *Missional* was not the first work published by the GOCN – *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* was released prior to it in 1996, drawing together many of the core elements of the GOCN discussion thus far – it nevertheless was the text that shaped the course of the conversation for many years to come. *Missional* sought to

[2] All these co-authors deserve a paragraph in their own right and have contributed greatly to the GOCN conversation with many other publications and edited works. Space constraints will not allow for that level of detail, though I do draw on their works as primary sources throughout this article. Joining them as consultants were also four respected theologians: Justo Gonzalez, Douglas John Hall, Stanley Hauerwas, and John Howard Yoder.

articulate what a missiological ecclesiology would look like in the North American context (Guder 2000, p. xii). After surveying the cultural and ecclesial contexts of their day, they concluded it was time for a "dramatically new vision," rather than "a mere tinkering with long-assumed notions of the identity and mission of the church" (Guder 1998, p. 77). And paint that vision they did. Using theology, history, and cultural analysis, the authors reframed the identity of the church as a communal witness of the reign of God, sent out into the world, to join the missionary God on mission – and explored the implications this would have on the structures of the church in North America.

Though at times written a little too academically for the non-academic to engage with,[3] and perhaps lacking in concreteness, so the concepts can occasionally seem vague and difficult to translate into practical situations, it is an outstanding piece of literature which – like Newbigin's works did in previous years – was the catalyst for much theological reflection on the nature of the church. Many other works followed and the conversation has continued to bloom over the ensuing years. What follows, is an attempt to draw together some of the various threads of the literature the GOCN has produced, and categorise them into key motifs – thereby exploring the GOCN contribution to mission in the West.[4]

Central Motifs of the GOCN

One of the central tenets of the GOCN – though this was first put forward by Newbigin – is that a trialogue take place between the gospel, Western culture, and the church (Hunsberger 1996, pp. 8-9). They argue that for a truly missiological stance towards the West to be authentic, then cultural analysis must be performed, deep theological reflection must be undertaken and congregational practice must be examined (Hunsberger 1996, pp. 290-291).[5] Until the church realises that Western culture has drifted from its Christian moorings, it will not genuinely engage with it; the church will thereby be speaking a foreign language to its context and hence will not effectively communicate to an audience that so desperately needs to hear its message.[6]

The GOCN have engaged in this three-way conversation for decades, and have theologised, conversed, experimented, and written about what a missionary encounter between the gospel and Western culture would look like. The genesis of their efforts was a fresh look at the missionary nature of the triune God.

[3] Something that members of the GOCN have themselves acknowledged (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011, p. 2 & p. 49).

[4] It is acknowledged that the motifs explored below are my reading of the GOCN publications and therefore open to my own bias and interpretation; others may read the same body of work and consider other themes more crucial. Cronshaw & Devenish (2014) for example have also identified central ideas of the GOCN conversation; I would recommend their excellent article to the reader.

[5] Hunsberger (1996) suggests that, "Our most fundamental missional calling is to live the same way in our own culture that we counsel others to live in theirs. This we cannot do unless we are seriously attentive to the character of our culture, receptive to the shaping force of the gospel, and willing to bear our missional identity as a gospel-shaped community" (p. 291).

[6] This is in part, a lesson to be learnt from the incarnation of Christ; "To be good news, the gospel must make sense to those who are hearing it…In becoming flesh, Jesus Christ as the living Word became understandable, knowable, and accessible for all time and to all persons" (Van Gelder, 2007, p. 62).

A Trinitarian Emphasis

Early on in the conversation, an emphasis developed that pointed to the Trinitarian doctrine of God as the key to reclaiming the church's true nature. The primary focus was on the economic Trinity; the Father's sending the Son, the Father and Son's sending of the Spirit, and the Father, Son and Spirit sending the church into the world. "This conception changed the playing field for thinking about mission by shifting the rationale and agency of mission away from the church and placing them instead within the life of the Trinity" (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011, p. 26).[7] In recent years, the social model of the Trinity, for which Moltmann is the great exponent, has especially contributed to the shape of Trinitarian theology as it is reflected in the literature of the GOCN. Social Trinitarianism focuses on the relational unity of Father, Son and Spirit.[8] In this social model of the Trinity, the term *perichoresis*, which speaks of the mutual indwelling or interpenetration of the members of the Trinity, has proven to be rich and evocative. *Perichoresis* may be seen as a pattern for the church to emulate; within the life of the Trinity and the church there is "inclusion, unity and cohesion; but there is also differentiation, identity, and plurality. Our life together is to have correspondence with their life together" (Branson 2007, p. 125).[9] Though this view needs to be balanced by New Testament examples (as well as contemporary cases) of local churches marked by fragmentation and division, it lifts one's eyes to the possibility of what the church should be, rather than what it all too often is. What has been absent in the literature and requiring further investigation is the connection between ecclesiological *perichoresis* and missiological implications. Christ pointed to the visible oneness and mutual love of his followers as a prime element of their communal life, and that this would act as evidence that his followers were indeed, following him (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23).

The Kingdom of God

The GOCN have also realised that the West needs to revisit Jesus' central message – the imminent inbreaking of the reign of God, including its present dimension (Matt 4:17, 23; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:42-44; John 3:5; Acts 1:3).[10] Jesus' proclamation was that God now ruled and his rule would triumph over sin and the forces of evil in the

[7] Kwiyani (2013) calls this movement of agency from the church to God as "one of the greatest landmarks in Christian theology in the twentieth century" (p. 162).

[8] Economic Trinitarianism developed in the West and has tended towards a structural, hierarchical, monarchical, and patriarchal view of God (Simpson 2007, pp. 82-83). The Eastern emphasis on the relationality of the Trinity stands in contrast to this with its mutual reciprocity of shared power (Bilezikian 1997, pp. 57-68; Seamands 2005, p. 39).

[9] Mark Husbands (2009) would disagree stating that the Trinity should not be understood as the model for human social patterns. He argues that humans cannot reflect the divine paradigm of interaction due to their creatureliness and asks rather pointedly; "'Where is this concrete human community of dynamic self-giving and love of which you speak so positively?' Is it not in fact the case that social trinitarians offer an inordinately idealist account of social relations?" (p. 125). The fact that it is rarely a reality does not necessarily indicate it is untrue. Moreover, Jesus prayed that just as He and his Father were one, so too, his followers would be one (John 17:20-23). That the world would be able to recognize the oneness of Jesus' followers means that it is more than a metaphorical unity and is visibly displayed in their relationships with one another. Furthermore, though the discussion of the *imago Dei* is far from conclusive, it is highly probable that the *imago Dei* refers to the relationality of humanity which reflects the triunity of the Godhead. It therefore follows that the ideal for humanity includes this reciprocal relationship of love, mutuality and service.

[10] It has been argued that the gospel that Jesus preached has not necessarily been the gospel that the church has preached, and this has impoverished the church's sense of missional identity (Guder 1998, p. 88).

present, as well as the future. This is the gospel; God reigns and access to him is granted because of the salvific act of his Son, through the work of the Spirit.

This reframes how the church is to live. Rather than falling into the trap of Old Testament Israel, tragically preoccupied with itself and "constantly self-absorbed with its own national survival" (Glasser 2003, p. 187), the church is called not to live for itself, but to announce the reign and sovereignty of an exceedingly good God. Hunsberger states it succinctly: "Most simply and directly put, it is the church's mission to represent the reign of God" (Hunsberger 1996, p. 15). The church is to be a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the kingdom; "The church becomes the *sign* that redemption is now present in the world, a *foretaste* of what that redemption is like, and an *instrument* to carry that message into every local context to the ends of the earth" (Van Gelder 2007, p. 19).

God's kingdom is present now and accessible to anyone, and yet, it is also still to come. Any authentic announcement of the kingdom must include the eschatological reality inherent in Jesus' proclamation and kingdom deeds. This announcement "pulls back the veil on the coming reign of God, thereby revealing the horizon of the world's future. The gospel portrays the coming of Jesus, and particularly his death and resurrection, as the decisive, truly eschatological event in the world's history" (Guder 1998, p. 86). His life, death and resurrection is but a portion of the good news of the kingdom of God breaking into the present. His second advent completes the picture – everything that is opposed to God's rule will be judged and the world will once again come under the kingship of Yahweh.

The Western church has by and large acquiesced to a privatised faith; its sole concern with individual salvation is an inadequate proclamation of the gospel Jesus preached (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011, p. 29). The message of the kingdom also challenges the many elements of Western culture that reject the rule of God. The good news of the kingdom is one that speaks to both the church and culture calling for them to turn; "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17).

The *Missio Dei*

The message that God presently reigns brought back into sharp focus the truth that God is active in the world. Western theology developed in a context that was essentially entirely Christian – at least in name – and therefore had little interest in the world outside the church; the discipline of missiology largely remained peripheral in Western theology (Bosch 1995a, pp. 27-32).[11] Bosch (1995b) rightly contended that if theology "ignores the question 'Why mission?' it implicitly ignores the questions, 'Why the church?' and 'Why even the gospel?'" (pp. 495-496). Indeed, he argued that theology is not theology if it loses its missionary character; "theology rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*" (p. 494).[12] That Western theology never really engaged with missiology in its attempts to understand God in relation to his world, meant that churches and Christians schooled within its

[11] Contrast that with theology throughout Asia and Africa however, and one gets a vastly different picture; developed in a non-Christian context, their theology is missiological through and through (Bosch 1995a, p. 27-28).

[12] Though Bosch was not part of the GOCN (having passed away in an automobile accident in 1992 in his home country of South Africa), many members in the GOCN have drawn on his writings considerably in the formulation of their teachings.

paradigms would necessarily lose sight of the missionary nature of God and of their own identity as God's missionary people.

Hence, one of the prime themes of the GOCN surrounds the *missio Dei* – God's mission. Bosch (1995b) defines the *missio Dei* as God's self-revelation as the one who loves the world, who embraces both the church and the world, and who invites the church to partner with him in the world (p. 10, pp. 389-391). God has a universal plan where all creation is reconciled to him and he takes the initiative in bringing it to pass. Mission is therefore more than just an activity of the church, it is the "result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation" (Guder 1998, p. 4). First and foremost, God is the one on mission.

To say that mission belongs to God is not to say that it does not belong to the church.[13] As Christ's body in the world, it is called to co-labour with the triune God, in the triune God's mission. The church is not the sole location of the activity of God, but is a tool he has chosen to use to accomplish his plan.[14] Newbigin (1998) rightly asserts that the church cannot escape its missionary calling if it is to be faithful to the missionary God; "We are not engaged in an enterprise of our own choosing or devising. We are invited to participate in an activity of God which is the central meaning of creation itself" (p. 83).

Reflection on the *missio Dei* has brought the world back onto the church's map – not that the church had intentionally ignored the world – rather that the church, shaped by a theology that was not missiological, tended to exclusively claim the location of the activity of God within its realm. The GOCN have sought to remind the West that "God cannot be restricted to what has been and is happening in Western cultural Christianity" (Guder 2000, p. 20).

A Public Truth

If the kingdom of the triune God has come and the church has been called to participate in the mission to point others to that kingdom, then the Christian faith cannot be a private truth for personalised religious practice. Newbigin has argued that the modern world has dichotomized private and public spheres and to accept this is to "deny the kingship of Christ over all of life – public and private. It is to deny that Christ is, simply and finally, the truth by which all other claims to truth are to be tested" (Newbigin 1986, p. 102).

As the church has been pushed to the margins of society, it has tended to focus exclusively on private spiritual matters and abdicate its responsibility to speak of the reign of God and its implications for the public world of economics, politics and culture. To declare the good news in the public square is an apostolic task of the church (Guder 1998, pp. 136-137). Brownson rightly affirms that, "the truth of the gospel can never be simply relegated to the sphere of the private, local, and particular. The gospel's claim to offer good news of cosmic significance is a constant prod to Christians to reach beyond

[13] Wright (2006) rightly labels this idea – that because mission was God's, it therefore meant that the church had no part to play – a distortion (p. 63).

[14] Seeing the church as the exclusive location of the activity of God can make the church responsible to carry out activities in the world on behalf of God (Van Gelder, 2007, p. 18-19). If that is the case, an inactive church means no mission takes place. Yet that does not ring true to the biblical witness of the God who moves and acts and takes initiative even prior to his people's active involvement (such as the act of Creation, the calling of Abraham, or the incarnation of Christ). There is no Scriptural question that God desires to partner with humanity, but he is not bound by uncooperative partners.

their own enclaves to address and challenge their culture and world with the gracious and hopeful claim that Jesus is lord" (Brownson 1996, p. 258). To leave the public realm uncontested is an abandonment of its calling (Newbigin 1986, p. 102).[15]

Genuine Dialogue with Culture

The fact that the gospel is a public truth does not however, mean that the church should revert to the old Christendom model of enforcing its values and lifestyle upon a nominally Christian culture. The biblical narrative reveals God meeting people within their own cultures and using the confines of those cultures to communicate his purposes.[16] Brownson thus comments, that "the mode in which God is present among the faithful is irreducibly multicultural" (Brownson 1996, p. 236). God both works with and judges human culture; discernment is needed therefore so that the church can affirm what God may be affirming and judge what God is judging. This requires a genuine dialogue with the culture. This cannot happen however, if the view of culture is dominated by either disdain or uncritical acceptance. What is crucial is that one learns to "distinguish the gospel of the Crucified One from the rhetorical values, pretentions and pursuits of this society" (Hall 1996, p. 213).

The choice of the word "our" in the GOCN reveals the extent that they are committed to this. Though lengthy, it is worth quoting Hunsberger (1996) in full:

> [There are] two important reasons why we cannot simply assume that we ourselves represent the gospel pole [of the culture, church, gospel trialogue]. First, our way of understanding God and putting the gospel can never be equated with the God who engages us and the message God addresses to us and the whole of the world. Our grasp and experience are necessarily partial; they are historically and culturally framed. We dare not treat this 'gospel and culture' thing as though we fit easily on the gospel side of it. Second, we dare not assume that we sit at some comfortable critical distance from the culture part of the equation, that we somehow are placed over against it. We are never that distinct from our culture. We are participants in it. We are shaped by it, and it pervades our entire framework of meanings and motivations. It shapes in a particular way our capacities to hear and grasp and decide about the gospel that is coming to us from God, and it colors the form of all our responses to it. It is 'our' culture we are speaking about, as much as it is 'our' God who encounters us within it. (pp. 294-295)

If one does not analyse culture, as well as reflect deeply on the gospel, a malformed gospel may result. Humans have a tendency to reduce the gospel to "fit" their culture – what Guder (2000) calls "gospel reductionism".[17] Shenk contends that the church only remains relevant as long as it remains in tension with culture; the task

[15] This motif does seem to have had greater emphasis in the GOCN's earlier works and far greater prominence in the British conversation.

[16] For example, God cuts a covenant with Abraham which was a cultural custom of the day to ratify the agreement. Furthermore, God accedes to Israel's request for a King in their desire to be like the other nations (1 Sam 8:7-8). Though the monarchy was not his initiative, he yet works through it and covenants with David, which ultimately leads to Jesus' kingship.

[17] Guder (2000) states that humanity's sinfulness "expresses itself in a constant, and often subtle, process: while adapting the gospel to the cultural context, which is essential to faithful witness, there is always the temptation to bring the gospel under control, to make it manageable. Thus, the task of witness as translation makes the continuing conversion of the Christian community necessary as it interacts with its culture" (p. 97).

is to train its members to view culture through the critically constructive lenses of the missionary (Shenk 1996, p. 78). Therefore, the stance is not one of disdain but rather it is one of cautious critique, challenging that which is anti-gospel but nevertheless ready to affirm that which aligns with the gospel. Critiquing one's culture is difficult because one is so often blind to its pervasive influence – or even its existence – but this is vital if one is to be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ. For Western churches to avoid this tendency of gospel reductionism, it means "maintaining the readiness to recognize unwarranted accommodations to their culture in order to disentangle themselves, while discovering the Spirit's creative work to make the church a faithfully Western incarnation of the gospel" (Hunsberger 1998, p. 279).

Disentangling and discovering are both necessary and do not occur without dialogue. A posture of openness is required, where "missionaries seek to share life and listen deeply in community with those to whom they are sent" (Zscheile 2013, p. 32). If the church fails to enter into genuine conversation with its culture, communication will not take place. Since the time of Constantine until relatively recently, the church and Western culture largely spoke the same language – that of Christendom. It no longer does so; the church tends to continue to speak Christendom's dialect whilst Western culture has moved beyond its Christian roots. For the gospel to be effectively communicated, it needs to be contextualised for this day and age. Van Gelder (2007) writes that Spirit-led congregations are those that are always forming (seeking to contextualise) and reforming (seeking to maintain the historic faith) (pp. 54-55). For the gospel to take root once more in the West, this process must be engaged in.

The church must be challenged to engage with its culture from a critical perspective, whilst embodying its message within the context it finds itself in, for without this, there can be no genuine contextualisation and hence no effective mission. In the words of the writers of *Missional Church*, "the church is always bicultural [living simultaneously in both the world and the kingdom], conversant in the language and customs of the surrounding culture and living towards the language and ethics of the gospel" (Guder 1998, p. 114). As Bevans (1999) helpfully remarks, being counter-cultural does not necessitate being anti-cultural (p. 154).

The Role of the Local Church

In many ways, the GOCN discussions find their locus in the question regarding the role of the local church.[18] One of the foundational premises of the GOCN conversation is that being a missional church is about an understanding of "*being* that leads to *doing*, rather than starting at doing" (Stache 2009, p. 238). The church must first know what it *is* before it knows what it *does*. Van Gelder (2007) writes, "Purpose and strategy are not unimportant in the missional conversation, but they are understood to be derivative dimensions of understanding the nature, or essence, of the church" (p. 17). The church is a local community of believers inspired by the Spirit,

[18] One member of the writing team of *Missional Church*, has more recently argued that the conversation has indeed been sidetracked. Roxburgh (2011) who has a unique "insiders" perspective due to his long participation with the GOCN, contends that the questions asked up until this point are the wrong questions because they are all about the church. To recover a church that is capable of engaging contemporary culture, he suggests the need to leave the question alone and move to asking questions about Scripture and culture. "The focus has been on one side of the triangle at the expense of the other two. The ecclesial element, the conversation about the missional church, has subsumed the other two within its agenda, so we see gospel and culture through the lens of church" (p. 54).

centring their communal lives on the person of Christ and participating in the mission of God by being the sign, instrument and foretaste of his coming reign.

Newbigin (1989) believed that the local congregation was the hermeneutic of the gospel, that the above motifs found their expression in the local congregation – if, of course, the local congregation faithfully lived out its calling (pp. 232-233). This will require the church to be "different from its surroundings in order to make visible and witness faithfully to the in-breaking reign of God" (Guder 1998, p. 128). Adjectives such as "alternative" and "contrast" are often used to describe the life of the church, because living under the rule of God will fashion a community into different forms than that of the prevailing culture. Its leadership practices, its way of being together, its way of serving the world, will be guided by kingdom values and hence will reveal that the new reality of God's reign is present now; "When it is healthy, Christ-centred and mission oriented, the local church is the proof of its own gospel, validating through its own life the presence and power of the kingdom of God" (Cronshaw & Devenish 2014, p. 90). The church is on display. Indeed, the church is the display.

The look of this type of church community will vary between contexts. "Missional engagement is not homogenous; there is no one-size-fits-all pattern" (Roxburgh & Boren 2009, p. 85). Though the lack of a clearly defined model would make it difficult for many church leaders to embrace, the reason why the GOCN have been so content with ambiguity regarding appearance or structure is that becoming missional really is all about the dialogue between Scripture, a particular culture, and a particular body of believers – the latter two being unique to each specific context. Form therefore follows mandate. The church has to structure itself in a way that works within its unique context, constantly open to changing its structures to best allow mission to occur.

Beyond Theological Reflection

The above motifs that the GOCN have wrestled with must go beyond just an idealised vision of what could or should be, and be placed into a concrete reality for any benefit to the church to have effect. I have had the privilege in recent months to liaise with a local church that is taking at least one of these themes seriously – the Trinitarian emphasis. Since the beginning of 2013, Clayton Church of Christ (CCoC) has been basing their ministry philosophy on a Trinitarian theology.[19] My time with the ministry has been brief – though I have known a few of the leaders for several years. I was invited to spend a weekend with their university campus ministry for a retreat as their guest speaker. Prior to the retreat, I met with two of the key leaders, and whilst at the retreat, I discussed some of their recent philosophical shifts with the Pastor who oversees this ministry. Several weeks after the retreat, I asked them via a questionnaire some questions regarding how a Trinitarian focus has impacted their ministry.

One benefit cited was the gradual decrease of individualistic mindsets and a corresponding increase in awareness of the body ministering to one another. For example, a shift has begun in attendance patterns amongst their cell groups; where once it was heard that people would opt out of attending a cell group due to "not getting anything out of it", there has been an increase of people choosing to attend even if they did not "feel" like it, because someone else in the group might miss out due to their absence and what they might contribute to the group. Another example can be seen during their time of corporate worship; CCoC have been teaching that ministering to

[19] Their focus has not been primarily stirred by GOCN literature but they have allowed Trinitarian theology to inform their ministry praxis – in particular, the social Trinitarian perspective.

one another is an act of worship to God, and hence, during their time gathered together they are encouraged to look around and be a conduit of God's voice towards one another through praying or prophesying over one another. I was able to witness this first hand and even be the recipient of such a prayer; "In so doing, we are coming together as a body before God, rather than 50 individuals in a room with no consciousness of the person beside them."[20]

An increase in unity and loving relationships is also cited as a by-product of this attempt to concretize a Trinitarian theology in the life of this congregation. People of diversity (international and local students for example) are being welcomed and finding a place of belonging. People are also becoming more conscious of those who are isolated in their midst and therefore more actively cared for. Attempting to live out the "one another lifestyle" in genuine community, speaking the truth in love, serving one another in mutual reciprocity, is producing heart transformation in the lives of those that attend CCoC.

The GOCN conversation is primarily missiological in nature and as yet, there does not seem to be a significant missional outflow at CCoC. Perhaps, this may be more a result of a focus on social Trinitarianism over economic Trinitarianism, where the "sending" of God is just as important as the "relating" of God. Nevertheless, it is still early days and there does seem to be movement in a missional direction. For example, the overseeing pastor envisages that evangelism would move from an individualistic effort to a cell group effort. During a workshop whilst on the retreat, there was already discussion regarding what the cell groups could do together to be a sign of the kingdom of God.[21] Vision also exists that sees mission being driven by the "groups intimacy with the Head [Jesus], not the top leader's direction";[22] something missional thinkers have been advocating for some years.

What I observed in my own heart over the course of the weekend was a softening or a wooing back to the church. It is difficult to be cynical towards the church – which the missional conversation sometimes lends itself to – when faced with a group of believers who are genuinely and faithfully trying to live out the image of the Triune God as a corporate body.

Conclusion

The Western church finds itself in uncharted waters. Pushed to the margins, it no longer has the voice in society it once enjoyed. In one sense, this is to be expected as Jesus himself declared that the world would persecute his followers (John 15:18-20). In another sense, this can be seen as an oxymoronic situation; the called out community of Christ was to be a city on a hill and a light in the darkness (Matt 5:14-15). The contemporary situation in the West shows that it is neither, and therefore requires a radical revision of the church's identity and mandate.[23]

[20] Pastor Chee Fah, personal communication, August 17 2013. Used by permission.
[21] One particular cell group were in concrete discussions regarding what they could do in their university as a cell group to bring the kingdom to others.
[22] Pastor Chee Fah, personal communication, August 17 2013. Used by permission.
[23] This is not to say that individual churches are not salt and light in their community. Rather, it is to say that Western culture rarely looks to the church for light or as an example of a society of shalom. It is a fact to be celebrated and rejoiced over that many churches throughout the West are in fact shining a significant light in the darkness of their world, even if the West does not acknowledge it. God is still using his church to point people to his kingdom.

The GOCN have been bold enough to face this dim reality. According to the GOCN's writings, the path to recovery is through a trialogue between the gospel, Western culture and the church. Without a genuine conversation between these three elements, the gospel will fail to penetrate the cultural barrier of the West – not because it lacks the power to do so (Rom 1:16), but because it will not be communicated in a way it will be understood.

The GOCN's "three-cornered" conversations have brought many issues to light. These issues have stirred up much discussion and have reinvigorated the questions surrounding God's being, God's purposes, and the essence of God's people. It cannot however remain at the level of theological reflection. These themes need to be processed in the hearts and minds of a local community of Christ followers, and then acted out in highly contextualized ways within the locale that community finds itself in. Embodying these motifs will hopefully challenge forms of the church that are perhaps simply carryovers from previous generations, and rather than look on the church with the curiosity of an oddity from a bygone era, society may once again acknowledge that the church's message carries relevance and life today.

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Journal of Contemporary Ministry

Pastoral Reflection

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In Praise of Pastors

Ps Jeremy Weetman

Jeremy Weetman has been in pastoral ministry for over twenty years. He and his wife planted the church they lead on the Gold Coast, Eikon Community, in 2006 and transitioned the congregation into a missional expression of church over the past two years. He has served on various denominational committees and is a sessional lecturer for Harvest Bible College, where he is also studying towards a Doctor of Ministry.

To an eleven year old Pastor Griffiths was a big man, with the commanding presence you would expect from an ex-sergeant major in the British army. He had answered the door when I arrived to collect the prize my RE teacher (his wife) had promised when I learned the 23rd Psalm off by heart. Somehow I think I managed to explain this to him, but you'll understand my response when he looked meaningfully at me and said, "I expect to see you in Sunday school this week young man." So my story, from RE class to Sunday school to meeting Jesus was largely framed by being confronted with the imposing presence of Pastor Griffiths.

He was always 'Pastor Griffiths,' never 'Pastor Joe,' although he became that to later congregations. To me he was always addressed by his surname, it was just 'right.'

He was my first pastor, and the man who taught me that to be a pastor was a calling, a vocation, a laying down of one's life for the sheep. Pastor Griffiths never had a church that numbered in the thousands, I don't even think in the hundreds, and yet over the years over a dozen full-time ministers came from churches he pastored.

As a boy I was a little scared of Pastor Griffiths, I think it was that commanding presence, but he was one of the most genuinely caring people I have known. My mum didn't drive, so he and his wife would call in to take her shopping each week and assist whenever and wherever they could. He was full of compassion and his eyes could carry a softness and warmth that would make anyone feel welcome and important.

To be a pastor is to be entrusted by Jesus with the care of his sheep, his people, his local gathering of disciples. We talk, preach, teach and research a lot about leadership, and thank God for it, but the New Testament only mentions *leader* to identify the leader of a synagogue in the gospel narratives, and the call or gift to lead is only noted in Romans 12 along with generosity, serving and encouragement. I'm not trying to diminish the need for solid leadership - goodness knows I need to strengthen that area of my calling - but I am suggesting we are missing the more necessary call to pastor.

The need for *pastors* is reflected in Eugene Peterson's memoir where he calls for a re-evaluation of the pastoral vocation as it is commonly practiced today as he seeks to answer the question, "What does it mean to be a pastor?" This can be a difficult question to find an answer to in a society where pastors are leaders, and managers, and often entrepreneurs, and even sometimes *drovers*, but in its simplest form a pastor is a shepherd.

The word *pastor* is only mentioned once in the New Testament, in Ephesians 4:11, however the concept of being a *shepherd* (or of caring for the sheep/people of God) is a major New Testament theme. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd in John 10; in Hebrews he is called the Great Shepherd; 1 Peter 2 refers to Jesus as the 'Shepherd and Overseer of our souls', in chapter 5 as the Chief Shepherd; and in Revelation 7 the Lamb (Jesus) is the one who will shepherd the martyred believers. Certainly a shepherd must lead, but a shepherd is one who leads by virtue of close relationship with the sheep (implied in Jn. 10:4-5 since the sheep know his voice) and 'lays down his life' for the sheep.

The apostle Paul chose an interesting word to describe how he understood what he and his fellow ministers did, one that implies the 'laying down' of one's life, the word *diakonos*. It primarily referred to servants who waited on tables, and in the Greco-Roman culture, "…was thought to be appropriate only for the low-born, women, or slaves" (Giles 1989, pp. 50-51), but in the upside-down world of the kingdom of God servanthood is to be embraced as done in the service of Christ, through the Spirit of Christ, for the body of Christ, by the people of Christ, servants of the servant-King.

In the most common instances where Paul refers to 'gifts' – including that of Pastor – in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 the gifts are for the service, for ministry, for the benefit of the body of believers. In fact the *ministry* gifts of Ephesians 4 are to equip the body for, "works of service (*diakonia*)". This view of Christian ministry might explain why Paul prefaces his teaching in Romans 12 with the need to renew the mind and not allow the prejudices and social expectations of culture to influence how Christian ministry, to which all believers are called, is practiced.

Such an understanding conforms to Paul's description of Jesus in Philippians 2 where the believers are urged to 'not look to your own interests but the interests of others,' so that they might have 'the same mind that was in Christ Jesus' who 'took the form of a slave…humbled himself…became obedient.' Although Paul uses the term 'slave' (*doulos*) to characterise the extreme descent of Christ, it was the attitude of humility, common to slaves and servants, that was being commended here. So immersed in this aspect of service, of his calling as a *diakonos*, was Paul that he can confidently demand of the Corinthians who are becoming prideful that, rather, they should imitate Paul's humility (1 Cor. 4:16) and later, in desiring the good of many rather than just themselves, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (11:1).

My memories of Pastor Griffiths are of a man who demonstrated this kind of ministry. He could preach, but he wasn't great; he could teach, but he wasn't great; he could lead worship, but he wasn't great; he had Godly wisdom, but wasn't a qualified counsellor. In my forty years as a Christian I have come across many people who were far more accomplished in these areas than Pastor Griffiths, but I have only met a few who have loved their congregation like he did. Although he worked full-time in secular employment he took seriously the mandate of Christ to care for the people with whom he had been entrusted.

Pastor Griffiths' evenings and weekends were taken up with meetings and Bible studies and prayer meetings and that most old-fashioned of pastoral duties – visitation. I sat in a class of experienced ministers recently as we discussed the nature of ministry, and the lecturer made reference to the classic book *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter. In it Baxter describes how he converted the town of Kidderminster by visiting the homes of the inhabitants and catchechizing them. We discussed how times had changed and how pastors no longer visited people in their homes and, in our time and culture, how many people prefer it that way. And yet, I thought of the sick, the elderly, the struggling families that I continue to visit because that is what Pastor Griffiths modelled for me, and that is what helps my congregation to feel loved and cared for and connected. Pastor Griffiths taught me that a pastor walks with his followers and lovingly and carefully (and sometimes sternly) leads them by giving his life to them and the journey they travel together.

Not everyone can do that. I only have a small church, and if I had hundreds, or thousands, there is no way I could visit people. I understand that this is why we have pastoral care teams or small-group leaders, and yet I also have the words of more than one follower of Jesus echoing in my mind that it is easier to get an appointment with their local member of parliament than their senior pastor. Not everyone can visit, not everyone wants to be visited, but I wonder what message would be sent and received if every now and then the senior leader visited the shut-in, the sick or the lonely?

Pastors are gifts to the body of Christ, and irrespective of whether they have a title or official role they will care for the people around them. Often leaders, preachers and teachers are remembered because of their level of influence, their writing or the recording of their talks. Not so much pastors. To be a pastor is a humble vocation where prayer, encouragement, shared sorrow and joy, and a deep care for those God connects you with is remembered only by those who journey with you. Pastors aren't always up-front leaders, on a platform, or recognised as such. Often they are people in any congregation or group who give care and support to those around them. Without these people our churches, our communities, our social groups and our world would be a far more damaged, hurting and fragmented place.

Caring for our congregations as servant-shepherds reminds us of our humanity and helps to keep us humble. When we are involved with the very human weaknesses, failings and struggles of ordinary people in their ordinary lives we are often confronted with our own weaknesses, failings and struggles. Along with his description of his vocation as that of a servant, Paul's favoured descriptor in addressing his letters is that of apostle (note that it is always, "Paul, an apostle," or similar, rather than Apostle Paul), which is often regarded by him as a ministry of weakness rather than one of status and grace (Clarke 2000, loc. 2107).

You would think that a seventeen year old would understand that his pastor was wiser than him, but I didn't. We had a situation in our church that ultimately decimated the congregation. I'm not sure what Pastor Griffiths could have done differently, and feel that through all the pain God was working his purposes for his church, but at the time I felt that it had all been handled wrongly and in the ignorance and arrogance of youth told my pastor so!

He was gracious, and though I could see the anger and hurt in his eyes, he said he understood my perspective even though he didn't agree, and urged me to pray for the church and the situation. So I did, and in that way that God has of revealing our own hearts, the Holy Spirit showed me that my reaction was born of my anger and my hurt and that rather than blaming my pastor I should pray for and with him.

I knew what I had to do, so with reluctance and embarrassment I went to his house and asked him to forgive me both my words and my attitude. He looked at me with gentle eyes, assured me that of course I was forgiven, and asked if I would pray with him. For the rest of the time I knew him, whether as my pastor or when we spasmodically met over the next few decades, he was never less than loving, gracious, encouraging and, at times, gently correcting.

My apology was accepted; our relationship remained strong.

I'm not suggesting that every situation should be handled in exactly the same manner, my point is that Pastor Griffiths *knew me* and responded in a way that provided for the greatest growth in my life and the healthiest outcome for our relationship. Pastors don't manage their congregations, they exegete them.

When describing himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus says that he knows his sheep and they know him, and then makes a stunning statement to describe the depth of that relationship, "Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (Jn. 10:15). The intimacy of the Trinitarian fellowship is the relationship Jesus has with his sheep. Obviously a pastor doesn't have that depth of relationship with his congregation, or even some of them, but the example set by the Shepherd is that those who are called as his under-shepherds will know the people with whom they are entrusted and will thus ensure the greatest care and journey of discipleship for them.

The leaders of local churches in the first century were charged by Paul to 'manage' (*proistemi*) his family - lead, direct, protect, guard - and 'care for' (*epimeleomai*) the congregation (1 Tim.3:4-5) - implying forethought and provision[1] (Vine 1997, p. 161) - which I would suggest seems to indicate more watching over *God's* church. This is an important distinction when we consider that Paul also calls these leaders 'stewards' (*oikonomos*) in Titus 1:7. The term steward was used of free men or

[1] Vine's notes: "the direction of mind towards the object cared for," and gives the example of the word as used in the story of the Good Samaritan.

ex-slaves, *or more often of slaves who performed this role for their master* (Young 1994, p. 102-103). This fits well with Paul's concept of gifted service and vocational disposition, since this overseer/steward's duties included, "…administer God's household…oversee the behaviour of the members…ensure sound teaching is promulgated…proper order is maintained…and respectful, orderly interaction between members of the household community" (Young 1994, p. 103). Such a role required both the gifting to fulfil the duties and the character to serve with humility and set the moral tone both within the community and, in this honour/shame conscious society, in the wider community as well.

The challenge of knowing the congregation, of caring for God's church as competent stewards, isn't necessarily dependent on the size of the local church but on the application and attitude of the pastor. Different sizes, different structures, different models and different cultures simply require a variety of approaches to the same end – knowing the people. What inhibits this outcome is organisational distance or isolation on the part of the pastor. As much as the biblical ideal is of a faith community of engaged disciples, this is also true of its leadership.

Whether Ephesians 4 refers to specific individuals whose vocational gift to the body is being described, or the 'ministry gifts' are each representative of a group of people so gifted within each local church community, there is no doubt that they are, indeed, gifts. Gordon Fee observes that the various lists of gifts we find in the Pauline epistles aren't exhaustive, but are representative of the diversity of the operation of the Spirit in the life of the church (Fee 1994, p. 161). Giles adds the insightful thought that Paul's description of these varied gifts ultimately excludes any separation between natural and supernatural ministries in the church and sees these gifts as whatever the Spirit presses into service for the growth and health of the church (Giles 1989, p. 16).

Pastors are gifts given by Christ and empowered by the Spirit for the building up of the body of Christ. To be a pastor, particularly one who has embraced a vocation as such, is often a difficult endeavour. We live in an often messy, always complicated and busy world. We live in a culture that is arguably more connected and less connected at the same time. This is the world in which pastors are charged by Jesus to shepherd the sheep, care for them, watch over them, and equip them for growth and maturity.

I remember sitting in Bible College during my final year, as a graduate of the college came to teach our pastoral ministry class. He looked at all of us eager young world-changers and began with words I have never forgotten, "Being a pastor is the worst job in the whole world…except for all the others."

Often that is our experience. People are thoughtless, and fickle, and take offense, and gossip, and criticise, and take pastors for granted. They are also kind, and generous, and supportive, and encouraging, and forgiving, and love their pastors more than we deserve. Pastors are flawed, messy and yet hopeful people who are seeking to shepherd other flawed, messy and yet hopeful people.

Pastor Griffiths taught me that loving God means loving his people as well, even when it is difficult and inconvenient and costly. He taught me that people are valuable because they are loved and valued by God.

And isn't that the Christian message?

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Journal of Contemporary Ministry

Student Article

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What is the preferred/dominant leadership/authority style that can be used as a tool that is both culturally appropriate and biblically justifiable, to identify and develop emerging leadership of Sri Lankan Pentecostal/modern church?

Ps Asanga De Costa

Introduction

The hustling and bustling street of Calcutta, filled with dust and dirt, did not make any difference to the on-looking crowds as they smelled the aroma of the thousands of bright yellow coloured marigold flower garlands hanging down in almost every nook and corner in the street. They forgot the day's troubles and worries as they heard the vibrant and deep, almost divine, voice of the man who was on the platform around the corner. He had clothed himself in bright shiny white fabric so as to symbolise his purity and the blood red mark that was distinct in his forehead showed his piety toward the ancient gods of the Himalayas. The drum sounds of festive joys

deadened the ears of the multitudes of people- he was the leader that they were expecting… for many days… to make a change in the society in Calcutta, India.

Meantime, in the deep interior of China, people were more relaxed and calm in an unknown village, where a group of rustics were listening to a man by the side of green paddy fields. The man looked old and serene; he was just like any other man in the village, tired and worn-out, yet something was special about him. He was the village 'wise-man' who instruct the villagers with the traditional knowledge coupled with years of experience on 'how-to do' in their daily course of life The villagers nodded their heads and dispersed quickly, following the instructions of this ordinary old man.

These two vignettes provide a glimpse of the different leadership styles of India and China. Both these men were influencing their society to make a change, yet they were very different in their approach to power and authority, based on their cultural values and understandings of the leadership style (DuBrin 2012, p. 465). In order to understand about leadership we need to first understand about power and authority. According to Boulding, power is the ability to get what one wants (2004, p. 7). Russell defines it as "The ability to produce intended effect" (ibid); however, according to Perkin's notion on influence and power, among various forms of influence, only the power (Influence) that comes through moral persuasion can be seen as 'Legitimate Authority' (Grant 2012, p. 60). If Maxwell sees leadership as influence (2001, p. 4) then leadership should be seen as the exercise of legitimate authority. This is further explained by Weber's notion, according to which, socially legitimated power is defined as authority (Blau 1986, p. 200).

Therefore, leadership means none other than the exercise of socially legitimated power. Ian Grant defines leadership as "the exercise of authority (legitimated power) within a relationship of influence to intentionally influence people and effect outcomes"(Grant 2012, p. 69).

However, as in the above presented cultural scenarios in India and China, the exercise of legitimated power, that is leadership, is directly influenced by cultural behaviours that are unique to a particular society. Therefore, leaders adopt styles and behaviours that are acceptable and desirable to the particular society that they intend to influence. According to GLOBE[1] research findings, cultural values and belief systems directly affect the style of leadership that is to be seen as desirable and effective by subordinates (Slocum et al. 2009, p. 309). Since norms and values of national culture (cultural perspectives) have effects on leadership, leaders of particular cultures tend to adopt accepted and desirable leadership style of that particular culture (Pauleen 2007, p. 10) for effective exercise of influence or power.

Consequently, finding a culturally-accepted and desirable leadership style is essential to efficiently influence a society. However, when we are talking about the leadership style that is needed to develop people in the church of Christ, we should note that it also needs to be approved by God through his Word. Therefore, ideal Christian leadership should be both culturally-relevant and biblically-justifiable or acceptable, to be used as an effective leadership tool to further identify leaders and develop leadership within the Christian church, since development of leaders is central to the mission of the church (Allen 2006, pp. 81-83).

[1] Read more about GLOBE research project on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Leadership

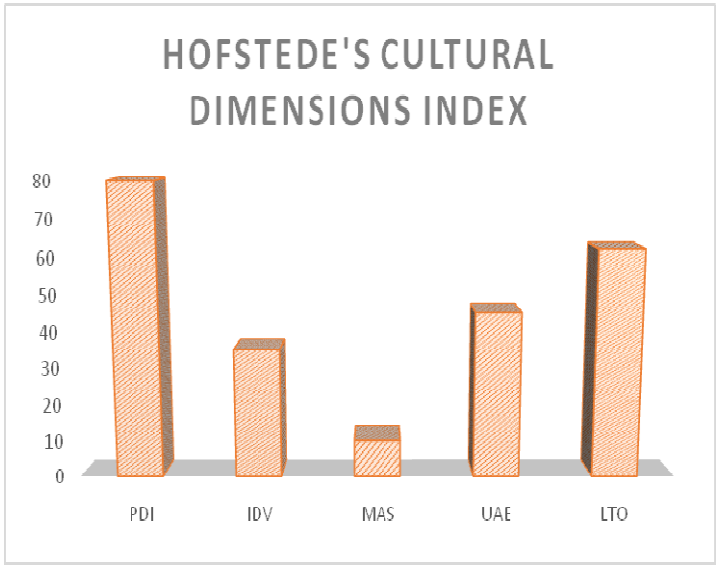
Therefore, this essay deals with the question of, "What is the preferred/dominant leadership/authority style that can be used as a tool that is both culturally appropriate and biblically-justifiable, to identify and develop emerging leadership of the Sri Lankan Pentecostal/modern church?"

This essay considers only the churches that are essentially Pentecostal/charismatic in doctrinal and practical approaches to ministry, and were established after 1948 (after the independence of Sri Lanka) as the 'modern churches' in the country.

Understanding Cultural Dimensions in Relation to Leadership in Sri Lankan Church

Though leadership development is central to the mission of God in the world, churches all over the world suffer from a serious leadership vacuum (Forman et al. 2004, p. 40) due to various reasons. However, finding a leadership style that is culturally preferred is crucial (Grant 2012, p. 87) for developing emerging leaders across the cultures, as societies view leadership from their own culturally affected worldviews. If the leadership style is not culturally preferred or desirable in a particular society, the influence of the leader is minimal or futile. Therefore, finding a culturally preferred leadership style is the key for a successful and positive influence in that society. From the interviews done as I was researching this topic, Sri Lankan prominent pastors are well aware of the leadership style traditionally preferred by Sri Lankan society. However, it is evident that they are uncertain as to whether or not they should adopt the traditionally dominant/ preferred leadership style to identify and develop emerging leaders in the church. It is my conviction that they have not contemplated deliberately and adequately the traditionally preferred leadership style of Sri Lankan society in comparison with the word of God to see if there is a correlation or an adoptable pattern. As a result, they need to begin to use both the text and the context to identify a concrete method or a style to use as a tool to identify and develop emerging leaders in Sri Lankan modern/ Pentecostal church, since appropriate Christian leadership is both scripturally faithful and culturally authentic (Grant 2012, p. 292).

FIGURE 1.



Therefore, first, it is important to understand the cultural dimensions of Sri Lanka in relation to the leadership preferences in Sri Lankan church. For this purpose, Geert Hofstede[2]'s 6 dimensions are considered in this essay in relation to the Sri Lankan

[2] (born 2 October 1928 in Haarlem) is a Dutch social psychologist, former IBM employee, and Professor Emeritus of Organizational Anthropology and International Management at the University of

society and the church; out of which five indexes[3] are explained in relation to the leadership.

Power Distance Index (PDI)

This explains the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions or the society as a whole accept and expect the power to be distributed unequally. Sri Lankan society has long years of traditional monarchical leadership (Reddy 2003, p. 47) with over 350 kings from 543 B.C to 1815 A.D[4] with some of the heroic kings reigning during this history. This system of authority included hierarchical leadership and authority delegated to regional leaders, down to village leaders according to a caste and class system (De Silva 1981, p. 41); therefore, the country traditionally has a high power distance in relation to leadership. Moreover, the country was a Portuguese, Dutch and English Colony[5] from 1505 to 1948 A.D.; as a result, a greater centralization of social organizations developed with a pyramidal structure of power in the society. Hence, according to Hofstede's PDI index, the current reading is 80 (Figure 1).

Currently, the country is governed by an executive president, with 250 parliamentarians and myriads of minor authorities, furthering a very high power distance in the society. Consequently Sri Lankan society sees leadership as a special privilege with an elevated social status and they have a high respect for leaders. People are eager to follow leaders as they put them on pedestals; they almost recognize them as divine. Although the Sri Lankan church has a healthy notion about leadership, it is still a social phenomenon and the church has a high respect for leadership. They recognize Christian leaders as divinely appointed, and enabled for leadership. People in the church always address leaders with their respective titles such as Pastor, Dr, Evangelist, etc. as a gesture of respect and are ready to follow them without much hesitation.

Individualism (IDV)

According to Hofstede, 'individualism' in contrast with its opposite (collectivism), is the degree to which individuals are incorporated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the bonds between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after her/himself and her/his immediate family. On the collectivist side however, we find societies in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families which continue protecting each other in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Sri Lankan culture is collectivistic in nature[6], as it has developed a group-oriented society in which the extended family is the smallest unit, extending then to clans, tribes, and castes accordingly. Decision making is mostly done by collective consent; political decisions such as elections and voting are mostly influenced by tribal or group contexts[7] and interests. Social gatherings, family

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Maastricht in the Netherlands, well known for his pioneering research of cross-cultural groups and organizations. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geert_Hofstede (Extracted 19th of May 2014)

[3] Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Long-term Orientation (LTO).

[4] http://www.kapruka.com/Sri_Lanka/ancientKings.jsp (extracted 19th of May 2014)

[5] http://infolanka.com/org/srilanka/hist/hist2.html (Accessed 19th of May 2014)

[6] Harsha Gunasena, Culture: Limitations of Sri Lankan thinking. http://www.island.lk/2004/04/08/featur01.html (Accessed 20th of May 2014)

[7] Vasuki Nesiah, Dynastic politics in Sri Lanka. http://india-seminar.com/2011/622/622_vasuki_nasiah.htm (Accessed 20th of May 2014)

celebrations and tribal ceremonies have high importance in Sri Lankan culture. In keeping with this, the Sri Lankan church has a strong collectivistic approach towards leadership. Believers build strong relationships with each other based on cultural values and practises and, therefore, decision making or choosing leadership are mostly based on collective thinking. Thus in a crisis, a group of people chooses new leaders that are favourable towards the group, ending commonly in church split scenarios. IDV index score is 35 in Sri Lanka.

Masculinity (MAS)

A high score on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success. Sri Lanka, with a very low score of 10, is therefore considered a feminine society. People look for harmony and equality, decisions are made through consensus, and female leadership is admired /encouraged in Sri Lanka, which thus produced the world's first female prime minister[8], and an executive female president[9]. Furthermore, it is clearly evident that many female figures have held high positions in social leadership throughout the history of Sri Lanka and most of the current organizational, political and social leaders are females. Likewise, Sri Lankan church has no discrimination with regard to gender; Christians tend to follow both female and male leaders alike as long as they exhibit leadership characteristics.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

The extent to which the adherents of a culture feel vulnerable by ambiguous/ unknown situations, and thus create beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these uncertainties, are shown by this index. With a score of 45, Sri Lanka does not indicate a strong preference. However, Sri Lanka as a Buddhist country holds a notion that the Karmic cycle influences the future, an idea which expresses a general fearfulness toward ambiguity and uncertainty hence Sri Lankans do not fully tolerate uncertainty in politics, economics and in social affairs. Consequently, the church in Sri Lanka does not tolerate ambiguity towards its leadership. A clear strong leadership with strong drive and vision is always desired. Believers tend to avoid leaders who lack direction, vision and a sense of destiny.

Long-term Orientation (LTO)

This means a society's will to delay short-term material or social success or even short-term emotional gratification in order to prepare for the future. Short-term orientation exists when a society is focused on the present or past and considers them more important than the future. Short-term orientation values tradition, the current social hierarchy, and fulfilling social obligations, and care more about immediate gratification than long-term fulfilment. The index score for Sri Lanka is 62[10]. The country has a strong emphasis on 2000 years of past tradition (Nubin 2002, p. 94) and present gratification is preferred to future fulfilments. The Sri Lankan church also has a strong emphasis on its tradition; however, Christians tend to follow leaders who can draw their identity from past and yet have a futuristic orientation. A 'future vision'

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[8] Dilip Ganguly, World's First Woman Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranayake Resigns. http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=82914 (Accessed 20th of May 2014)
[9] Chandrika Bandaranayake (Presidency from 1994 – 2005 A.D.)
[10] http://wiki.gishan.net/wiki/Geert_Hofstede_Cultural_Dimensions_Values_for_Sri_Lanka (Accessed 21st of May 2014)

driven leadership is always desired, thus followers tend to gather around leaders who can articulate future endeavours.

To sum up the Sri Lankan church leadership in relation to the cultural dimensions, it is sensible to say that church prefers a leadership that is high power distanced, hierarchical, somewhat traditional yet futuristic, innovative and visionary, able to get the attention of the society and able to handle them as one group, strong directional, destiny driven, able to provide solutions to immediate crisis, both mystical and inspirational.

The reasons for such leadership styles are obvious. As a country with a close proximity to the vast Indian subcontinent with its strong culture, Sri Lanka suffered from frequent attacks from India (Trainor 2001, p. 124). Then with the advent of colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, and English, the countrymen often needed a leader who stepped out in a time of national crisis, offered solutions to immediate needs and challenges, united the whole country and brought victory with the aid of mystic and cosmic intervention.

Identifying Historical and Modern Leadership Legacy and Their Preferred Style of Leadership

This section will be dealing with some of the prominent historical and modern leaders and their legacy and the preferred style of leadership within the contexts they lead. The purpose is to further confirm the conclusion stated at the end of the last section and to grasp a better understanding of the leaders in Sri Lanka, in terms of their behaviour in the face of challenge and the impact of their leadership style on general society. Therefore, four historical leaders along with three modern leaders are mentioned briefly in this section.

Table 1: Historical & Modern Sri Lankan Leaders, their Contexts and Gifts

Leader	Crisis/ Challenge	Gift
King Parakrama Bahu The Great A.D. 1123—1186	Unified the country under one rule, systematized the chain of authority in the country, reformed Buddhism, and liberated the country from Indian invaders.	Sage, military strategist, economist, reformist (is venerated by traditional Singhalese)
Weerahennedige Francisco Fernando) Veera Puran Appu (Alias) A.D. 1812-1848	Led a band of outlaws against the cruel British colonizers, liberated a large part of the up county region from the oppression of the English Army.	Military strategist, orator (His outstanding bravery, patriotism and leadership is still taught in schools)
S. Mahinda Thera (Monk) Who arrived from Tibet A.D. 1901-1951	Used his poetic talent to the best of his ability and raised Sri Lankans from their slumber and inspired them to fight against the British tyranny to regain their lost freedom and national pride.	A great Poet, religious leader
Don David (later known as Anagarika Darmapala A.D. 1864-1933	Started a patriotic national movement against Christianity, promoted Buddhism as the way of life.	A great orator, spiritual leader, propagandist
Mahinda Rajapaksha A.D. 1945	Successfully defeated the world's most dangerous terrorist group	Military strategist, orator, actor

	known as LTTE after 30 years of war.	
Susantika Jayasinghe A.D. 1975	Won a silver medal in women's 200-metres sprint event at the Olympics Games in Sydney (country's first female Olympic medallist).	Sports icon, bold and courageous female leader in sports (South Asia)
Prof. Cyril Ponnamperuma A.D. 1923-1994	Developed the science and technology in developing countries, director of the Institute of Fundamental Sciences (IFS) & Arthur C Clarke Centre for Modern Technologies (ACCCMT), closely involved with NASA in the Viking and Voyager programmes.	Scientist, educator

These seven significant leaders stand for many similar leaders who have arisen throughout the country's history. In spite of their different fields of influence, all of these leaders had a similar style of leadership, with one thing in common, which is an extraordinary gift to bring about change, through their military abilities, scientific knowledge, sports, and poetic and literacy ability etc.

All these leaders all rose to a position of influence through their gifts in a time of national crisis, whether political, religious, social, educational or economic. They all brought a radical solution to the crisis and the immediate need of their society. Sri Lankan society embraced their leadership, seeing them as heroes /saviours of the country. They were able to validate their gifts and power of influence repeatedly through successful endeavours in their respective fields.

They all had a sense of purpose and were driven by that purpose. They all were able to capture the attention of the people and people willingly followed them on account of their purpose, vision, and personality. They all became zealots and leaders in their own right regardless their social contexts. They all had radical innovations to overcome crisis and brought radical transformation to the society.

Therefore, it is fitting to say that all of these leaders have had the same style of leadership, which was culturally preferred and accepted by the society. Furthermore, it is proven that they made a lasting impact by stepping up in a time of crisis to answer the call by their unique gifts, and to radically change the Sri Lankan society using their persona and gift. Having identified sociological and historical aspects of Sri Lankan leadership style, the next vital step would be to seek a biblical pattern as a comparison to such a leadership style.

Identifying a Biblical Pattern that Corroborates the Culturally Preferred Leadership Style

The Bible is full of leaders and different leadership styles (Smith et al. 1989, p.32) based on different situations, contexts and cultures. Therefore, leadership styles vary with the situation. In finding an appropriate biblical leadership style, the researcher must first identify his/her own context, looking for elements in their culture that might be similar to biblical culture and context. Hence, this section investigates similar cultural contexts and similar leadership styles from the Bible that are mostly suitable to Sri Lankan cultural and historical context. Thus, some of the biblical leaders

are considered and profiled within their own historical and cultural contexts in the following chart.

Table 2: Key Biblical Leaders, their Contexts and Gifts

Name	Context	Gift
Joseph Genesis 37	Worldwide famine: (Gen. 43) the Israelites and then known world was at a verge of extinction. Joseph was able to understand, strategize and deliver the then known world through his leadership.	Seer, economic strategist
Moses Exodus 2	The Israelites were under the slavery in Egypt, Moses was able to deliver them and take them towards the promise land.	Education, miracle working ability, military, political and religious strategist
Joshua Book of Joshua	Israelites were unable to conquer the promised land; Joshua with his military capabilities conquered and established the nation.	Military strategist
Othniel Judges 1:9-21	He became the first warrior-Judge of Israel and delivered Israel from the oppression of the Edomites.	Military strategist, Warrior
Deborah Judges 4:1-5, 31	Was a prophetess and a Judge. Deborah and her general, Barak (Naphtali), defeated Sisera, the General of the army of Canaanite King Jabin of Hazor at the Battle of Kishon near Mt Tabor.	Prophetess, military strategist, judge
Gideon Judges 6:1-8	Delivered the people of Israel from the hands of the Midianites.	Judge, military strategist
Samson Judges 13	Delivered Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines.	Extraordinary Physical strength
David 1,2 Samuel	Started his leadership by delivering Israel from the hands of Philistines, He united the whole Israel and established it under one rule, established the worship of Yahweh.	Military warrior, administrator, poet, musician
Solomon 2 Samuel	Under his leadership, Israel reached the golden age of Israel through economic, political endeavours. He built the temple of Yahweh.	Wisdom
Paul Acts 9	He extended the church to the gentiles and established churches throughout Europe, raised leaders.	Wisdom & knowledge, miracle worker, strategist , orator, teacher, apostle
Peter Acts 2	Boldly led the first church which was under the oppression of Jews.	Apostle, miracle worker, preacher & a teacher

Arguably, these leaders have had similar historical contexts to Sri Lankan history. Ancient Israel, as a small nation surrounded by enemy states, had to constantly fight for their survival (Gabriel 2003, p. 231). Thus, the history of Israel is quite similar to the history of Sri Lanka, which was constantly attacked by powerful foreign nations. Therefore, most of these biblical leaders had a similar style of leadership to Sri Lankan leaders: they all possessed an extraordinary gifts; the difference is that biblical leaders were gifted by the God of the Bible whereas, Sri Lankan leaders do not attribute their natural talent or gift to the creator God, although they do connect themselves to a higher being or Karmic or cosmic powers as they are mostly adherents of Buddhism. Second, these biblical heroes arose in a time of national crisis and were raised up exclusively by

God. They all brought radical solutions to the crisis, and followers were attracted to them, and their leadership was validated by repeated experience of success through their gifting.

Therefore, it is evident that there is a correlation and corroboration between the Sri Lankan historical context and the biblical history and the Sri Lankan leadership style is comparable with that of some of these leaders in the Bible, due to their identical contexts, patterns and elements of leadership. Having identified a biblical pattern that corroborates with Sri Lankan leadership style, the next step is to examine the leadership style of the Sri Lankan church.

Understanding Sri Lankan Church's Preferred Leadership Style

This segment investigates the Sri Lankan church's preferred leadership style as a continuation of the context of Sri Lankan culture and history in connection with the identified biblical texts of leadership. This will be a reflection analysis based on interviews conducted with ten identified national leaders of the country.[11]

- Nine out of ten prominent pastors identify that the traditionally and culturally preferred/desired leadership style in Sri Lanka is charismatic leadership. This refers to those who are highly visionary, with strong stature, administratively gifted, expressive, image oriented, able to get the job done, flamboyant, efficient, with appropriate "knowhow", a good voice, skilful and able to drive people.
- Six out of ten lean towards charismatic leadership as the suitable style for Sri Lankan churches. One preferred "biblical" leadership; however, he was unable to articulate the meaning. Two leaders said that the Sri Lankan church prefers a 'servant model or style' and one said a more 'culturally guided' style is appropriate.
- All of them identify 18 Key Christian leaders of the country as prominent; frequently mentioned names are Dr. Colton and Dr. Ajith Fernando. Evidently, these ten key pastors see these 18 leaders as great leaders based on their gifting, achievement, and charismatic personality. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that they assess greatness on the basis of charismatic endeavour and personality.
- Most of them identify another emerging leader based on their talents, gifts, power and the fruit of the Holy Spirit, charisma, anointing, and ability to lead others. It is reasonable to conclude that these qualities lean towards charismatic leadership style. (It has not been clearly defined yet in this essay what it is to be charismatic. This will be discussed in the next section).
- Out of ten, only three key leaders have a clear articulated and processed method to develop up-coming new leaders, based on their own personal philosophy of developing emerging leaders.

Therefore, we can conclude that the Sri Lankan church leans towards charismatic leadership because it is a culturally as well as biblically preferred leadership style, since it deals with gifts, vision, power and abilities. Existing pastors

[11] They were interviewed via telephone and email using a model questionnaire and their insights and thoughts were clearly recorded in order to grasp the general concept of leadership in the Sri Lankan Church.

also see the existing Christian charismatic leadership (prominent 18 leaders) of the country as desirable, based on their culturally preferred models and biblically-justifiable features.

Proposing a Leadership Style for Sri Lankan Church to be Used as a Tool to Identify and Develop Emerging Leaders

The cultural dimensions of leadership, historical and current contexts of leadership and Christian leaders/pastors' notions on the ideal leadership style for the country and examples of existing Christian leaders are considered in previous sections of this essay. The culturally preferred and dominant style and the biblically-justifiable leadership style for Sri Lankan church seem to lean towards a charismatic leadership style, hence the charismatic leadership should be understood broadly in order to draw a conclusion.

Max Weber[12] is one of the first sociologists to introduce the concept of 'Charisma' to the study of leadership. His concept of charisma was an adaptation of the theological concept which involves endowment with the gift of divine grace (Bass 1974, p. 185): individuals are given special gifts by God, for the work of service. In Romans 11;29, 12;6, 1 Corinthians 12;9, 12:28, 12;30,12;31, the word 'Charismata' is mentioned in the original Greek, translated to English as 'gifts'[13] which are the supernatural abilities given by God to individuals for the mission and the work of God (Schmitt 2002, p. 45). Weber develops his concept of charismatic leader from a theological point of view as a person with a divine gift of grace, who is a mystical, narcissistic, and personally magnetic saviour with a doctrine to promote who arises in times of crisis (Bass 1974, p. 185). These gifts or 'charismata', however, were given to the individuals to build the church, or to influence the growth of the church (Simon 1987, p. 144). It is therefore, a source of influence or power given to the individuals of the church (Armentrout et al. 2000, p. 84) to affect an outcome, that is, to cause a growth.

A Christian leader, according to Clinton is, " A person with God-given capacity and God given responsibility to influence a specific group of God's people towards God's purposes for the group" (Elliston 1992, p. 23). Therefore, charismata or the gifts of the spirit are a source of influence and a power on which individuals draw their authority for leadership. Since Maxwell sees leadership as influence, charismata become a leadership tool as they are inherently influential. Furthermore, since these charismata were given to influence the church (believers/people) for growth, it is consistent with the leadership definition of Ian Grant that 'the intention of influence is to intentionally influence people and effect outcomes'. Moreover, charismata, as a source of Influence, are consistent with Clinton's definition of Christian leadership since it is a 'God-given capacity' to 'influence' people towards a 'goal'. Hence Weber's definition of charismatic leadership has a theological validity based on the word of God. Therefore, we can conclude that charismatic leadership in biblical perspective is referring to a leader who has a divine influential power or ability, to lead people towards a goal or outcome. This is evident through the New Testament endorsement of charismata to church and the Old and New Testament models of leadership in their historical contexts.

[12] Economist, Political Scientist, Educator, Philosopher, Scholar, Sociologist, Anti-War Activist, Literary Critic, Journalist (1864–1920). http://www.biography.com/people/max-weber-9526066#awesm=~oFIzbhsodD7sjY (Accessed 22rd of May 2014)
[13] http://biblehub.com/greek/charismata_5486.htm (Accessed 23rd of May 2014)

Consequently, a biblical charismatic leadership style is also consistent with the Sri Lankan Christian church's preferred leadership style, which is recognized and desired by Sri Lankan church leaders. However, Weber's concept of charismatic leadership style needs more explanation. According to Weber, charismatic leaders are highly esteemed persons with exemplary qualities, who display confidence, dominance, and a sense of purpose, and who articulate the goals and ideas for which followers are already prepared psychologically (Fromme 1941). They also have an extraordinary influence over their followers, become an inspiration to their followers and become zealots and leaders in their own right (Trice et al. 1986, pp. 113-164). They provide radical innovation (Stark 1969, pp. 88-90) and can be seen in religious and political arenas as well as in organizational and military settings (Handy 1976, pp. 123-136).

Biblical leaders that are mentioned in this essay resemble all these charismatic elements in their lives as they served the ancient Israel in their crisis situations. They have had a sense of purpose that is to redeem Israel and establish God's rule, they became zealots and leaders in their own right even though they were raised by God himself. They possessed extraordinary gifts and qualities from which their authority was drawn.

Likewise, the Sri Lankan historical and current leaders display the same extraordinary qualities and gifts with a sense of purpose. They were radically innovative, and became leaders in their own right. Moreover, the Sri Lankan prominent church leaders that are mentioned bear resemblance to both biblical charismatic leaders and Sri Lankan historic and current charismatic leaders, since they also possess the same qualities. These biblical leaders and Sri Lankan historic and current secular and religious leaders and church leaders are leaders who have charismatic style in religious, political and military settings. Therefore, again, it is arguable to say that the Sri Lankan churches' preferred leadership style resembles the qualities of some of the biblical charismatic leaders as well as the historical and current Sri Lankan charismatic leaders.

Furthermore, Weber applied the concept of charisma to understand the development of complex organizations and he saw the gift of extraordinariness, bestowed to a person not by God but by followers and subordinates in organizational contexts. He borrowed the idea from a theological perspective (Bass 1974, p. 185) later; Trice and Beyer were able to sum up Weber's conceptualisation of charismatic leadership in five components. Those are:

1. A leader with extraordinary gifts, talents
2. An unstable or crisis situation.
3. A radical vision or solution to the crisis.
4. Followers are attracted to the exceptional person because they believe that they are linked through him to transcendent powers, and
5. Validation of the person's gifts and transcendence in repeated experiences of success (Hackmen et al. 2013, p. 121).

These five elements of charismatic leadership style can directly be connected with Sri Lankan cultural dimensions related to historic and current leadership. Culturally Sri Lankans prefer a leader who is transcendent, who provides radical solutions to crisis situations. Sri Lankans are risk takers, collectivistic and follow leaders with zeal, look for leaders with a vision, a direction, and tend to avoid uncertainty and

ambiguity in all the matters of life including leadership. This provides an ideal cultural context for a charismatic leadership style. Furthermore, all the historical and current leaders of the country have these five elements in their leadership. They possessed extraordinary gifts such as military capability, wisdom, strength, poetic or literacy ability; they all rose to power in a national crisis situation; and they brought a radical vision or solution to the crisis. Moreover, people connected with them and believed that they are connected to transcendent powers through their leader, and the leader's validation was established by his/her repeated success. Therefore, Trice and Beyer's exegesis of Weberian concept of charismatic leadership style has a direct connection and similarity to Sri Lankan historic and current leadership style.

Likewise, the biblical charismatic heroes surveyed in this essay also possessed these five elements in their historical contexts (Table 2). Moreover, the Sri Lankan prominent Christian leaders, such as Dr. Colton and Dr. Ajith Fernando and the other leaders alike also displayed the same characteristics, because they all are extraordinary gifted people with radical visions and solutions to the Sri Lankan church situations which people chose to recognize and therefore follow them. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the preferred/ dominant leadership style for Sri Lankan church should be charismatic leadership, since it is historically and currently preferred and dominant style in the country.

However, some of the theorists do not fully agree with Weber's definition of charismatic leadership or his interpreters' definitions of it, and have proposed their own definitions. For instance Boal and Bryson states that visionary charismatic leaders need no crisis (Bass 1974, p. 187) and Schiffer suggests that charismatic leaders can have Weberian elements but may lack talent or success at times, yet followers are attracted to them (ibid). Furthermore, Berlew sees only three characteristics/ components of the charismatic leadership style, such as: confidence building, shared vision, and creating valued opportunities (Bass 1974, p. 186). Nevertheless, Sri Lankan charismatic leaders possess these characteristics of 'non-Webarian' charismatic components as well.

Therefore, having discussed extensively the Sri Lankan church's preferred/dominant leadership style by consulting cultural dimensions (Figure 1), historical and current, secular, political and religious leadership contexts, findings on Sri Lankan prominent pastors' notions on leadership style that is appropriate to the country and an analysis of the identified key Christian leaders and their preferred style along with some of the key biblical leaders in their historical contexts (Table 2), I now suggest that the leadership style that leans towards the Weberian concept of charismatic leadership would be the preferred/dominant and culturally appropriate model for Sri Lanka as a tool to identify and develop leaders, since that can also be justifiable from the word of God.

Consequently, I now propose criteria based on the studies done, as an effective tool for the Sri Lankan church to identify and develop emerging leadership. The church as a whole should look for these criteria in emerging leaders so as to identify the culturally preferred leadership style that is relevant and optimally effective in the Sri Lankan church and society. These six criteria of leadership identification are:

1. A person who possess an exemplary qualities of both biblical and moral ethics.
2. A person with divine endowment of gift/ gifts (charismata) to influence the people of God positively towards God's goals or purposes.

3. A context for the emergence of leadership. Leadership needs a crisis or unstable situation whether it is social, spiritual, natural or strategically created which facilitates the emergence of leadership.
4. A person who has a God-given vision, purpose or direction as the solution, who is able to articulate and communicate it well, shows confidence and is able to inspire people towards God's solution or purpose, thus,
5. A person who is able to gather and unite followers, lead them towards a God given destiny through his/her exemplary qualities and divinely inspired solution, vision or sense of purpose.
6. Affirmation of his/her leadership through validation of gifts by proper use in ministry, evident by God's blessings and fruitfulness; the validation of his/her exemplary character by followers/church, validation of his/her vision, purpose or solution by progressive development and fruitfulness towards God's destiny.

The Sri Lankan church should carefully observe the elements and gradual development of the above proposed criteria in the individuals who emerge as potential leaders. However, in spite of all the models and styles that are presented in the broad spectrum of leadership, the gradual development of the character of the emerging leader is of utmost importance in development. As Grant puts it, 'character is to leadership is the soil to crop. The range and composition of nutrients determine the quality of the crop, so the elements or constituents of character determine the quality of leadership' (2014, p. 6).

Moreover, leadership is a gradual development, a progressive process (Stadler, 2008, p.62) in which God develops a leader over a lifetime, by the use of events and people to impress a leadership lessons upon a leader, known as 'process items'(Grant, 2014, p.6). Therefore, the Sri Lankan church should not only seek the above stated criteria in one point of time, but constantly observe and identify the growth of those elements, in a ministry of an individual, to identify his/her leadership in the light of God's dealing in his/her life. Furthermore, the church should constantly dedicate itself to develop the emerging leadership, skills and talents that are vital to leadership function. Lack of leadership skills that are vital to overall performance of the church or organizations is known as 'the leadership gap' i.e. the vacuum created as a lack of leadership skills, which can impact negatively on the performance of the productivity of the mission and ministry of the church (Knites et al. 2013, p. 37). Hence, constant, appropriate training of skills and gifts development according to the context or situation of ministry is fundamental, in emerging leadership development.

Conclusion

In summing up, this essay suggests the preferred/dominant leadership style of the Sri Lankan Pentecostal/modern church is the Weberian charismatic style, since it is culturally appropriate and biblically-justifiable. The above mentioned criteria are suggested to identify and develop the Sri Lankan church's preferred leadership style.

As a minister with fifteen years of experience in various aspects of ministry, my own beliefs and values have changed radically as a result of this research. First, I found my own personal philosophy to identify authentic Sri Lankan leadership, since I had no such philosophy before; it had always been a spontaneous and automatic act in ministry. Second, as leadership is as vast as ocean, and affected by cultures, history and

worldviews, I will be extra cautious in my future mission endeavours across cultures for optimum results. Third, the Bible as a leadership manual cannot be directly applicable to social and cultural contexts in its entirety. It has to be carefully filtered through social and cultural contexts to appropriately and effectively use the biblical leadership styles/principles that are most suited to the given context. Fourth, I now have a new found respect for Sri Lankan culture, and a determination to find out the best ways and means to communicate gospel truths and to develop leadership in such a way as to avoid cultural barriers for effective mission. Fifth, I believe the Sri Lankan church needs more research done in the aspect of leadership development. My future ministry will also be directed towards this. Finally, my own leadership style needs alteration to make the maximum impact to the Sri Lankan Pentecostal/modern church.

This essay also has a mission implication. Since leadership is understood differently from culture to culture, a missionary must have a deep understanding of his own cultural dimensions, biblical culture, and his/her receiving culture for fruitful communication of the gospel and development of leadership as a central aspect of cross-cultural missions. Having identified a degree of Sri Lankan leadership nature and style, my earnest prayer is that this essay may produce a positive impact in future cross-cultural mission endeavours in between Australia and Sri Lanka.

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Theses/Dissertation Listing

Compiled by Kerrie Stevens

AALIA, MAppSc(Lib&InfoMgt)(CSU), BBus(InfoMgt)(RMIT)
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This section contains bibliographic details of selected theses relating to contemporary ministry awarded in 2013

Australia, New Zealand & the Pacific

Ayton, Darshini Rebecca

'From places of despair to spaces of hope' - the local church and health promotion in Victoria. Doctorate – Monash University. Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, 2013

Bickerton, Grant R.

Spiritual resources as antecedents of work engagement among Australian religious workers. Ph.D. – University of Western Sydney, 2013

Jamieson, Helen

Embodying Christ: the call to be a church in an Australian context. Ph.D. – Charles Sturt University, 2013

Marak, Marlene C.

Telling stories: applying narrative form of communication for inclusive worship. Ph.D. – MCD University of Divinity, 2013

Whitney, Jerry Trevor

Towards liberation: pastoral relationship with people with intellectual disabilities living in institutions. Ph.D. – Flinders University of South Australia. School of Humanities, Dept of Theology, 2013

United Kingdom & Europe

Latham, Rosamond Mary

The making of priests: an examination of the post ordination experience of mature stipendiary clergy within the Church of England in the first three years of parish ministry. M.Phil. – University of Birmingham, 2013

Newitt, Mark Julian

Ritual, Pastoral Presence, and Character Virtues in Healthcare Chaplaincy: a study of chaplains' support to bereaved parents following the in utero or neonatal death of their baby. Doctor of Theology and Ministry – Durham University, 2013

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*The fresh significance of chaplaincy for the mission and ministry of the Church of England: three case studies in community contexts.*Professional Doctorate – Anglia Ruskin University, 2013

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A multicultural church? Multicultural ministry as a tool for building the multicultural church. Ph.D. – University of Birmingham, 2013

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A program of ministry to manage conflict. D.Min. – Tennessee Temple University, 2013

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Case studies of effective leadership structures in selected Chinese churches. D.Min. – Dallas Theological Seminary, 2013

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Communication challenges of pastoral ministry for young people in Indonesia: the case of Nusa Tenggara Timur. M. T. Major in Social Pastoral Communication – University of Santo Tomas, 2013

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Crowther, Dianne Elizabeth

Developing a model of pastoral care for persons on the dementia journey. Ph.D. – University of Queensland, 2014

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Grace and participation in the theology of Thomas F. Torrance. Ph.D. – University of Aberdeen, 2014

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Models of ministry to serve the elderly in assisted living facilities. D.Min. – Phoenix Seminary, 2014

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Crist, Mark R.

Ministry with immigrants: how a rural congregation moves from impediments to opportunities. D.Min. – St. Paul School of Theology, 2014

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"Our sons and daughters shall prophesy": p(r)eaching with millennials. D.Min. – Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2014

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'We got next: making room for young clergy leadership in the 21st century': how five young clergy have prepared for ministry. D.Min. – Wesley Theological Seminary, 2014

Asia

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The Spirit and the meal: a ritual-liturgical evaluation of charismatic worship. M.A. (Theol.) – University of Pretoria, 2014

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Traumatic suicide attempt due to lack of remuneration to clergy by the church: a pastoral care perspective. M.A. (Theol.) – University of Pretoria, 2014

Lee, Seungwoo

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Pastoral care of the families of the deceased clergy. M.A. (Theol.) – University of Pretoria, 2014

Rivas, Gary Lloyd

Accidental disclosure of adoption: a challenge to pastoral care. M.A. (Theol.) – University of Pretoria, 2014

Journal of Contemporary Ministry

Book Reviews

Dr Clayton Coombs

PhD(Hist. Th)(Wheaton); MA(Bib Studies)(Fuller); GradDip(Th)(Tabor); MMarketing (Market Research)(Monash); HD(Marketing)(Monash); BBus(Marketing)(Monash); Dip(Market Research)(Monash)
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Book Review Editor

Buxton, G. (2014). *An Uncertain Certainty: Snapshots in a Journey from "Either-Or" to "Both-And" in Christian Ministry*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Reviewed by Dr Jon K. Newton

At Harvest Bible College we have a Masters level subject called "Theological Reflection for Ministry." This subject seeks to help practicing or preparing Christian ministers to reflect with some theological depth on the situations they face in ministry and hence deal with them better. Graham Buxton's new book may well become a sought-after text for this kind of course and compulsory reading for ministers of all persuasions and varieties of service, since it is a stimulating and paradigmatic model of theological reflection for ministry in practice.

Buxton contends that many Christian ministers "are tired of simplistic certainties, often associated with formulae for church growth, and narrow, dualistic 'either-or' thinking; what they are looking for, and what they need, is permission to live with uncertainty, with mystery, ambiguity, and paradox" (p. 214). He urges us instead to increasingly move towards a "both-and" pattern of thinking, that is, one that engages with insights and truth from both "sides" in various questions and hesitates to proclaim answers with absolute certainty (though affirming the certain truths of the Faith strongly). This is the objective that he explains at the outset of the book.

The reader is then taken on a stimulating and, at times, provocative journey through a range of issues that ministers face—perhaps especially those who, like Buxton, have been influenced by the charismatic movement. The author discusses theological issues such as the transcendence and immanence of God without getting bogged down in "theology-speak" and always with a view to the practical outworking of

the theology in actual ministry. He also considers controversial ministry-focused topics, such as the nature of local church leadership, in a balanced and considered way, having himself faced the hard choices involved.

One of the best features of this book is the way that Buxton draws on personal experience *and* distils wide reading across a range of recent and older authors, to make practical and illuminating points. For example, in the chapter on church leadership, he begins with a simple anecdote about a conference and goes on quickly to introduce insights from Martin Luther, Alister McGrath, Brian Harris, Howard Friend, John Goldingay, Stephen Pickard and Margaret Wheatley, among others! He brings in ideas from Appreciative Inquiry, Open Systems and Receptive Ecumenism. All these threads are woven together skillfully to create an insightful meditation on the leadership of local churches that also draws in sound New Testament teaching. And in keeping with the "both-and" thrust of the whole book, he promotes a participatory style of leadership, emerging from below as well as from above, while emphasizing that "this way of thinking *does not eliminate hierarchy*" (p. 135).

Another great quality in the book is Buxton's ability to surprise the reader (well, this reader, anyway) with little glimpses from Scripture that flood the mind with light. For example, his short commentary on Job 38–39 (p. 187) includes this line: "having listened patiently to Job and his friends, God responds by inviting Job to consider the immensity of his creation, with the implied question: 'Who, then, do you think *you* are?'" Perhaps the shortest, most effective indictment of anthropocentrism I've read!

Of course the argument does not always convince. There is the inevitable difficulty of avoiding "either-or" thinking: am I using *either* "either-or" *or* "both-and" structures as I consider any particular topic? Sometimes this seems like a device used more to make the "unacceptable" acceptable as a possibility, as in the most risky chapter in the book "A hell of a problem." Here Buxton seems to be advocating a quasi-Origenist form of evangelical universalism and I think he loses sight of the "both-and" in his effort to answer the objections to this view. But even here he is moderate, honest, practical, clear and mostly fair, though I think he fails to give the Scripture passages implying eternal torment sufficient weight and avoids the Book of Revelation with a somewhat cavalier dismissal (p. 68).

This book is comprehensive in its coverage of the kinds of issues Christians wrestle with today, the issues they need wisdom and pastoral guidance about from those who have truly thought through the problems in a way similar to Buxton. It could be used as a kind of handbook, but I'm not sure that would do it justice. For me it functioned more as a thought-starter, one that opened my mind to new illumination of the Spirit. I found Buxton's thinking enormously helpful to me as a pastor and theologian and I think it will be a book I recommend to all my pastor friends.

Foster, T. (2014). *The Suburban Captivity of the Church*. Moreland, VIC: Acorn.

Reviewed by Ps Andrew A. Groza

The way churches proclaim their message and practice their faith is often moulded by the culture they inhabit. Tim Foster takes this concept of the shaping power of culture seriously in his powerful and thought provoking book *The Suburban Captivity of the Church.* Foster argues that the Australian church's message has by-and-large been

shaped by the cultural narrative of suburbia. In the process of moving from the suburbs to take on a parish in Sydney's inner city, Foster realised that the "...way we had come to understand the gospel, church and the Christian life, as well as our values and aspirations as Christians, was not simply a product of the Bible, but of a spirituality that was shaped, more than anything, by life in the suburbs" (p. 2).

Foster begins by examining afresh the gospel message. He labels the message that is often proclaimed today as the "punitive gospel." Frequently, today's articulation of the gospel centres around the following tenets: humanity's rebellion towards God, the punishment that rebellion requires, the death of Jesus that assuages God's wrath, forgiveness of sins for repentant humans who trust in Jesus' death, and entrance into heaven in the afterlife. That was very much the message I preached as a pastor in church when seeking to see people open their hearts to Christ at the end of a service. The effect however is that it makes humanity the focus of the message rather than God, and it makes the gospel all about "me"; "Rather than challenging my human self-centredness, this approach capitalised on it, presenting God as the servant of my needs" (p. 12). Foster makes it clear that the above elements are all vital, but insists that the biblical narrative paints a much broader, more God-centric vision. He argues, rather persuasively, that the framework for that gospel, which centres on God's punishment—hence the punitive title he ascribes—does not do justice to the good news Scripture teaches. Rather than seeking to answer the question of how an individual can be saved, the biblical witness focuses on answering, "How is God recovering his purposes for the world?" (p. 14). Framing the articulation of the gospel around God and his purposes—what Foster calls the telic framework, from the Greek *telos*—puts human salvation in the right perspective, as well as makes sense of the rest of the biblical story which is so often overlooked. Foster proceeds to trace the trajectory of the biblical story from Genesis to Revelation, creation to new creation, and shows how the gospel declares that the old order of life (marked by self-interest, greed, exploitation, poverty, relational breakdown, ecological disaster, etc.) has been dealt with in the life, death *and* resurrection of Jesus, which proves that God's new order (the Kingdom of God) has come. This opens a new way to relate to God, ourselves, other humans and to the world (pp. 24–25).

Framing the gospel in this way, brings it into dialogue with a church's inhabited culture in a way that the punitive framework, with its predominant focus on the afterlife, cannot. Chapters 2 and 3 therefore, deal with this issue of cultural narratives (the stories that shape our culture, and thereby shape a person's values, aspirations and identities), and the need for the church to contextualise its message so that the gospel can critique, affirm and subvert the culture that so shapes us. He argues that the gospel must engage at the deep level of cultural narrative, for if it does not, "...we will produce converts who remain highly accommodated to their culture, failing to truly and fully embrace God's vision for the world" (p. 42). Chapters 4 through 6 contain cultural analysis of three separate subcultures and what contextualising the gospel using the telic framework could look like to suburbanites, urbanites, and battlers. The chapter on the suburbs particularly ties into his thesis that the contemporary expression of church is very much tied to suburban values and aspirations, and the potential problems this brings; "[p]eople are far more likely to embrace a less-demanding gospel, one that offers eternal security while allowing people to pursue their dreams uninterrupted" (p. 83). Could it be that we struggle to build our churches because our people have been conditioned to view life through this aspirational suburban lens and we have perpetuated it by preaching a message that aligns to it?

It is difficult to find fault with Foster's work. One thing that would have been appreciated would be a more thorough process of discerning meanings behind the symbols, myths, and rituals of a culture discussed in chapter 2. As Foster himself notes, these artefacts are sometimes well camouflaged and even if they can be spotted, "...their meaning can remain elusive." (p. 38). Being equipped to read symbols, myths and rituals well would go a long way to being able to intelligently dialogue with the cultural narrative. Yet, not having confidence of accurate interpretation, given the potential for misunderstanding and imprecise meanings, makes the process difficult to engage with. This is why a more thorough process would have been welcomed.

Pastors would benefit greatly from reading this book, (or at the very least, the chapters, "What is the Gospel?" and "Good News for the Suburbs"), irrespective of whether their context is suburban or not. This book affords the church the opportunity to critique its current message and practice, and to question just how much message and practice has been shaped by the suburban story. It is hoped that it spurs fresh efforts at contextualisation, so that the glorious message of our Saviour is not ignored outright because the church is still seeking to answer questions our society is no longer asking.

Giles, K. (2012). ***The Eternal Generation of the Son.*** **Downers Grove, IL: IVP.**

Reviewed by Lucia Hosking

The title of Kevin Giles' new book may seem somewhat obscure, and for some, yet another example of how Christian theology is concerned with expounding on primarily minor, sideline issues that have little impact on everyday life and ministry. However, do not let the title fool you. The book is concerned with a cornerstone of the Christian faith; Jesus' very nature.

Many Christians would affirm that the Son is indeed eternally begotten of the Father, especially for those familiar with the Nicene Creed, and yet would not be able to explain why this is the case or why it should be so. In recent discussions it has been suggested that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son be abandoned given it is at best, inconsequential, and at worst, unbiblical; a doctrine that implies the eternal subordination of the Son, even the Arian heresy. It is in this context that Giles mounts a rigorous defense of this cornerstone of Christian doctrine.

The nature of the Son's relationship to the Father is the crux of Christianity. Jesus' nature is the point of contention between the world's three monotheistic religions, as his claim to divinity is what divides Muslims, Jews and Christians. Moreover, as the hope of salvation lies in Jesus' nature and work on the cross, the question of Jesus' role in the Godhead has profound implications not only for evangelism but the entirety of the Church universal. In a world of increasing pluralism and declining Biblical literacy, Giles' book is a welcome resource for those in ministry who need to understand why theology matters and why we must hold on to the faith as passed down to us.

In his introduction, Giles seeks to show that this doctrine is indeed under attack, with one section titled 'The Evangelical Call to Abandon the Doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son' (p. 29). He recalls a lengthy, and disconcerting, list of contemporary evangelicals such as Wayne Grudem and Mark Driscoll who would

eagerly abandon the doctrine, given its apparent lack of clarity or biblical support. This apparent lack of biblical support is one of the strongest arguments in favor of casting off the doctrine and in his second chapter, Giles examines what exactly a 'biblical warrant' looks like. Or, as Giles frames the question, how does one engage in evangelical theology? Is it simply a matter of finding Scriptural proof-texts or are other sources needed?

Giles has discussed and defended his theological method before, in books such as *The Trinity and Subordinationism*, where he was then accused by some of advocating a dangerous 'slippery slope' view of Scripture where there is no one correct answer, but rather a multiplicity of answers that depend on one's context and culture. In later books, such as *Jesus and the Father,* and the book under review now, Giles adamantly rejects this and states unequivocally that "The Bible is the ultimate authority in answering theological questions, but doing evangelical theology involves more than direct appeal to the Bible" (p. 40).

His second chapter explores the essence of effective evangelical theology. He is critical of any approach to theology that claims the 'Bible alone' as a source, as this is impossible, since "everyone comes to the text of Scripture with beliefs that they have inherited" (p. 52). '*Sola Scriptura'* is not '*Solo Scriptura.*' He believes that an effective safeguard against allowing individual presuppositions and beliefs to color our interpretation of Scripture is to let those beliefs be informed by "... the ecumenical creeds and the Reformation and post-Reformation Protestant confessions" (p. 55).

Giles claims that chapter three is about examining the biblical evidence for the doctrine, however, it may be a disappointment for those looking for rigorous exegetical work. Giles acknowledges this and states that as the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son does not stand or fall on the basis of certain verses, (as these verses are precisely what makes the issue contentious), his defense of the doctrine will come from other sources. Chapters four through to seven function as a helpful historical overview of the doctrine of eternal generation from the third-century apologists through the post-Reformation Protestant theologians. It is in the subsequent chapters that Giles mounts his most rigorous defense, as he rebuts the arguments of those who are questioning the doctrine's necessity.

Given Giles' pedigree as a staunch opponent of the view that the Son is eternally subordinated to the Father, the question with which chapter eight is concerned, "Does the eternal generation of the Son imply or necessitate the eternal subordination of the Son?," is one that is often posed to him by some who struggle to see how the Son's eternal generation and eternal subordination could possibly be separated. He points out that our concept of 'begetting' cannot be likened to the Father's begetting of the Son. Giles makes it clear that "[t]he eternal begetting of the Son does not involve a change in God. He is eternally triune. There never was a time when the Son was not" (p. 219). He also shows how the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is perhaps the best way of differentiating the persons of the Godhead, as it does not differentiate them on the basis of power, authority or being, but only as "begotten God" and "unbegotten God". This safeguards the *aseity* of God.

In chapter nine Giles counters arguments that there are better ways to ground the Father-Son distinction than the eternal begetting of the Son, and is quite persuasive in showing how the only two other alternatives have heterodox implications. Here is where he must address the 'subordination' issue, as many have argued from the false

notion of ontological subordination within the Trinity, that women are to be subordinated to men. Giles deals with this particular doctrine in far greater depth in his book *The Trinity and Subordinationism*, a book that has stirred up so much debate that it has its very own discussion website. However, he briefly shows how this injures the nature of God and does a disservice to our understanding of the Trinity. The other option put forth by contemporary Evangelicals is that the "differing works of the divine three seen in the economy eternally and primarily differentiate them…" (p. 220). Both alternatives are problematic as they "ground divine self-differentiation on what is revealed in the economy" (p. 235) and this would mean God is bound by history and time.

The strength of this book is Giles' willingness and ability to critically engage with almost every major theologian on the issue, giving the reader a good grasp of the doctrine's historical and theological development. However, strength can also be viewed as a weakness, since so many church fathers and theologians do come to the same conclusion, and this may come across as repetitive to some readers. Ultimately, Giles mounts an impressive defense of this important doctrine, and in doing so, sheds light on the relevance of church history and tradition for contemporary ministry.

Hey, S. (2013). *Mega Churches: Origins, Ministry and Prospects*. Preston, VIC: Mosaic Press.

Reviewed by Dr Angelo Cettolin

Mega Churches is a valuable resource for both the ministry practitioner and the scholar. This monograph is based on Hey's thesis exploring the phenomenon of megachurches in Australia, which he defines as Churches with over 2000 members. Hey has unique insights, because he is a Pentecostal minister and insider as well as possessing extensive experience as a church growth analyst and academic.

Hey traces the origins and developments of megachurches in Australia and provides an in-depth examination of the megachurch through his association with the Christian Outreach Centre, Brisbane, the flagship church of the COC denomination. The book contains many valuable insights into the religious social scene in Australia and how this differs from other Western situations. The benefits and challenges to its adherents are honestly examined in addition to prognostications of the future.

Hey analyses the rationale for the origins and growth of megachurches, and the lessons that can be learnt from their revival methodologies, leadership styles and organisational structures. He explores how mega churches have made forays into politics, developed schools, colleges, welfare programs, mission initiatives, and morphed into church networks and newer denominational movements. He also looks at the application of church growth principles in Australia's unique cultural milieu.

This book reflects extensive research for a doctoral thesis, covering a decade of work. At times it is repetitious and can be dense in style. It would have benefited from more rigorous editorial attention. There are a number of errors with regard to church names and dates. Likewise, the table of Australia's largest churches is helpful, although there are some inaccuracies as to information on dates and leaders' names and some newer church are missing (p. 11). The book, however, provides a goldmine of information on the founding of some important churches in Australia, and it includes

some fascinating insights into the giftings, proclivities and flaws of significant church pioneers, founders and senior leaders.

One of the telling insights is that in contrast to the USA, almost all of Australia's megachurches are found within the category of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Hey suggests that, in the Australian context, "Pentecostal churches have found the organizational freedom and revivalist religious characteristics that favour mega church growth" (p. 10). Hey raises the question, but does not fully answer, why other "varieties of Australian churches appear resistant to the adaptations that are needed to promote mega church growth" (p. 10). He notes that even the few megachurches in traditional denominations are indebted to charismatic and Pentecostal-type practices to draw and hold their congregational members.

The more important questions Hey seeks to tackle are: how effective is the mega church in preserving core belief? in contributing to the *Missio Dei*? and in communicating the grace of God as revealed in Christ? He provides a thorough critique although it is difficult to generalise as there are significant differences from church to church.

Hey proposes that megachurch growth was aided by drawing power of revivalist beliefs and practices, providing a pragmatic experiential theology. A fascinating insight is that Australia's megachurches emerged as part of global cycles of renewal in evangelical Protestantism. These are related to cycles of social, religious and economic change and are a response to a loss of faith in the institutional traditional churches. Hey also claims the popular appeal of megachurches is based on the contemporary, postmodern and individualistic societies in which they are found. However, the evidence suggests otherwise, as borne out by the global growth of classical and neo-Pentecostal and charismatic mega churches in more communal (and some pre-modern) societies on the continents of Africa, South America and Asia. Some of the world's largest megachurches are located in non-Western societies with the world's largest megachurch, Yoido Full Gospel Church, located in South Korea.

Hey's study reveals that some of the megachurches' weaknesses have been an over-emphasis on intuitive experientialism, hard-to-prove supernatural claims, pragmatic methodologies, isolationism from broader society and wider sources of knowledge, an unquestioning obedience to charismatic leaders and an insufficient regard for scholarly reflection. He does note nonetheless, that the second generation of megachurch leaders appear to be taking steps to address the limitations of earlier revivalist methods and engage more fully with contemporary society and its needs. This has resulted in a decline in emphasis in some revivalist practices and beliefs such as speaking in tongues, healing, and expectation of the parousia. Reference to my own doctoral research in 2006 into the practices of Assemblies of God in Australia (AOG) ministers would have confirmed Hey's views of this decline. However, my dissertation also points out that while public expressions of speaking in tongues in congregational meetings has declined, it has remained consistently strong in the ministers' own private practices.[1]

[1] Angelo U. Cettolin, unpublished doctoral thesis: "AOG Pentecostal Spirituality in Australia: A Comparative Study of the Phenomenon of Historic Spirituality and its Contemporary Developments within the Assemblies of God in Australia", *Australian College of Theology, 2005, 2006.*

While increased institutionalisation has led to a positive increase in certain aspects of quality it has had less favourable effects in the loss of innovative, supernatural and experiential practices which fostered the initial growth of megachurches in the first place. Hey claims this has resulted in less lay involvement and the plateauing of attendances. However, clearly this is not consistently the case across the board as there is evidence of increased and continuing growth in some churches such as the now-global *Hillsong* movement and the new *Planetshakers* megachurch in Melbourne. Further, other newer megachurches are not mentioned, for example *Stairway Church* in Vermont, Victoria (formerly a Christian City Church) led by Peter McHugh. This church is enthusiastically embracing an emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship and evangelism as championed by leaders such as Bill Johnson from *Bethel* in Redding, California.

Hey asserts the trend towards the lessening of supernatural, revivalist and Pentecostal practices is likely to continue but if the 20-30 year cycle of global religious renewal patterns since the Azusa Street revival holds true, we are also likely to see further renewal and revival movements emerge in the future. I think there are signs of renewal already here.

The study also highlights the role played by charismatic megachurch founders in making innovative responses to religious needs. Hey identifies a transition that is now taking place from the revivalist founders to second-generation megachurch leaders. These are not infrequently, the biological sons of the founders. These leaders show less emphasis on revivalist charismatic practices and more on institutional management. Although they appear to be dealing with some of the weaknesses of charismatic leadership such as lack of accountability and an over reliance on, and unquestioning obedience to, leaders, they are currently facing the dangers of over-institutionalisation. The results already seem to be showing with less lay involvement and less innovation. However, it is also likely that new groups led by charismatic leaders will re-emerge with all the inherent dangers.

One of the insights of this study is that growth has been assisted by the adoption of forms and business practices that promote growth through the various organisational development phases. In particular there has been the adoption of structures that balance diversity and the free growth of decentralised sections together with tight central control. However, Hey expects that logistical constraints in our societies together with organisational maturation will lead to the plateauing of growth. He predicts this will be interspersed with periods of renewal, the development of new 'products' and programs as emerging gaps in the market are responded to. Continued mergers and takeovers of smaller or less viable churches by the megachurch franchise model are likely. He highlights the role of diversification and reproduction through low-cost franchise methods.

Hey notes that although this market orientation has shown an ability to attract and hold large crowds, it often leads megachurches to reflect the negative aspects of consumer oriented societies, with an over emphasis on individualism, simplification, unquestioning certainty, and superficiality. It is heartening that more challenging and prophetic alternatives that address these weaknesses and injustices are now starting to emerge. The megachurches' development into the area of politics, education and welfare have resulted in better social engagement that will have benefits for church life but they need to be well thought through to be effective.

Hey explains that the continued growth of mega churches was helped by their effective responses to changing market conditions arising from social change, including responsiveness to the younger generations and the rise of postmodernism. Deliberate efforts will be needed to avoid maturation and decline from market saturation, over-institutionalisation and to provide continual effective responses to social change.

Hey's study has demonstrated that while megachurches have shown some limitations and weaknesses from their revivalist origins and their modern consumer focus, they do actually change over time and develop responses to these issues. As a result they have emerged as an alternative to the older and more traditional forms of church. The Pentecostals' emphasis on Spirit empowerment, the commissioning of all believers, their mission focus, and their desire to attract more people to maintain the megachurch facilities, has created an alternative to secular society. It has resulted in a creative engagement with modernity and even postmodernity.

Hey concludes that it is a mistake to dismiss these "Conservative supernatural groups as outdated, superstitious, and authoritarian" (p. 285). This would demonstrate a failure, "[t]o fully understand the changes that are taking place, or the ways in which these new groups develop and mutate over time" (p. 285). Nevertheless, to maximize their positive impact they will need to avoid the dangers of social withdrawal, over acceptance of individualism, consumer orientation and over-dependence on charismatic leaders. They will need strong systems of accountability and allow greater participant involvement in decision-making. They must learn to critically evaluate the prevailing culture while offering credible alternatives.

Hey admits there is a wide diversity in the current Australian and global church, so recognising there are limitations to his study. Nevertheless, he has successfully pursued a middle course of critical observation but with an insider's understanding and sympathetic insight. This book provides a welcome resource not only for those in the academy but also for leaders of mega churches seeking to steer their churches and movements through choppy, ever-changing seas into the opportunities that the wide horizons ahead afford.

Rose, G., Hughes, P. & Bouma, G. (2014). ***Re-Imagining Church: Positive Ministry Responses to the Age of Experience*****. Melbourne: Christian Research Association.**

Reviewed by Dr Jon K. Newton

Over the past half-century, dramatic and fundamental changes have been taking place in Australian society and culture. The tide of Christendom has gone out, often leaving the boat of the Christian church "high and dry." But more than that, so has the tide of modernity and rationality, the worldview that sustained our western culture since the Enlightenment. This book explores the efforts of the congregations of the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania to respond to this "discontinuous change" and "re-imagine" the church in ways that can relate to postmodernity, in particular what Gerald Rose calls "the experiential shift."

After a short introduction by Philip Hughes and a longer analysis of "what happened to British Protestants" by Gary Bouma, two of the most prominent analysts of contemporary Australian religion, Gerald Rose presents us with an analytical survey of

how the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania are travelling. In an even-handed and sympathetic account based on in-depth interviews with Churches of Christ ministers, Rose shows us the incredible variety of responses and models adopted by these churches as they attempt to pursue "a 'missional' approach to doing church" (p. 31) and gives the reader at least some sense of why these choices were made and what the results have been.

The first model studied in this book was "intentional missional ministry" (p. 44), which springs from a rejection of the traditional church, and an attempt to do something quite different so as to connect with the non-Christian context, based on the idea of "belonging before believing" (p. 47) and a theology of hospitality. Other models place more emphasis on charismatic gifts, relational ministry, reclaiming secular space for the transcendent and practicing classical spiritual disciplines. Some of the churches studied have embraced gradual, "adaptive" change, to the changing society, whereas others have sought a much more radical shift. And not all the changes studied have proved successful in the end.

Rose explores the influences that have caused churches to go in one direction or another; this analysis is insightful and quite comprehensive. The influences of the minister's own spiritual experience (such as whether they had had a dramatic conversion experience or not), the Charismatic movement, specialist church consultants, denominational programs, the denominational training college and denominational traditions (going back to the roots of Churches of Christ in the Restorationist movement of the early nineteenth century) are carefully examined. For instance, Rose shows us that the leaders of the largest Charismatic congregations had had no theological training when they began and that ministers influenced strongly by the theological college (especially female ministers) tended to move towards a more ecumenical and classical spirituality.

Most important is his thesis that the strongest factor is the churches' response to the "experiential shift." The Churches of Christ had been somewhat locked into an outlook and worldview shaped by rationality and evangelical modernity, but that is changing. While many ministers in this research study have embraced a more experiential form of Christianity somewhat unconsciously, and only realized this when interviewed, most of them had embraced experientialism deliberately, if not suddenly. Some made this change by encouraging spiritual gifts and overt Holy Spirit experiences associated with Pentecostalism. Others encouraged an experience of the transcendent through serving the poor, or through the classical spiritual disciplines like *Lectio Divina*, or through a revitalized practice of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. But almost without exception, these churches have responded positively to the experiential shift and their response has been a primary factor in revitalized and growing congregations. The strength of this thesis is enhanced by Rose's attention to a range of other factors in church growth or decline as well.

I came away from reading this book with increased respect for the Churches of Christ as one of the more vital, diverse and flexible Christian movements in Australia and with an appreciation of the range of varied models God can use to reach Australians. I also strongly admired the impressive qualitative research methods used by the author. Obviously the thesis of the book would be enhanced by broader data from church attenders in addition to the reports of the ministers, but nonetheless this is a valuable piece of research which, I think, offers hope for leaders of all Christian churches trying to navigate a way forward in an increasingly difficult cultural context.

Sanders, M. (2014). ***Art and Soul: Generating Missional Conversations with the Community through the Medium of Art.*** **Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.**

Reviewed by Dr Jon K. Newton

This book is a spinoff from a Doctor of Ministry thesis but don't expect a dry academic tome. The best thing about Michelle Sanders' book is that the author is doing what she writes about, both in the missional church she and her team are planting outside Melbourne and in missions tours of the USA. She thus demonstrates the strength of the book's argument in practice.

Sanders' basic thesis is that the world is not going to come to church; rather the church needs to go out into all the world (guess who said that?) and engage it in ways unchurched people can understand. It is a cross-cultural challenge now that we live in a post-Christian world. In a sense this is not a new proposal, and Sanders bases her ideas on the model of the earthly Jesus, but many of us have asked, "How?" This book gives an exciting answer. Michelle Sanders uses her ability with a paintbrush to engage unchurched people in "missional conversations" which include praying for their needs. It is a different approach designed to cross bridges rather than the traditional literature stands and open air campaigns of old. It is not just art as a kind of sermon but a way of connecting with people's felt needs. Other ideas are offered for those who are no good at art, such as a street party (p. 18) or getting involved in social justice causes, since "many unchurched people want to have an impact in their world, but are unsure how to go about it" (pp. 47–48).

This book is not just a collection of "tips for starting conversations" or the like. It has strong arguments that draw on wide reading and theological reflection, interacting with figures like Karl Barth (p. xvii), Alan Hirsch (pp. xviii,17), N.T. Wright (p. xix), Reggie McNeal (pp. 13–14), Paul Fiddes (pp. 14–15), Stanley Hauerwas (p. 32) and others. It is also grounded in credible research from the National Church Life Survey and other sources in Australia and equivalent sources elsewhere. The use of art is also defended from theological and historical standpoints (pp. 20–29) as well as by its therapeutic value (pp. 30–37).

But what makes the book really engage the reader is the short anecdotes that illustrate the arguments. We meet a host of characters that you won't find in church: a bikie gang opposing child abuse, Sergio the "sexican Mexican," Katrina the suddenly bereaved mother and daughter, Max the confirmed and rude atheist, three young "practicing pagans," Julie the school teacher who introduces "Art and Soul" to her classes and "Tricky Paul" the unpredictable social worker. And what we learn from all these stories is that the most unlikely people are just that—people with real needs, hurts, longings and an openness to God if he is presented without 'preachiness' or judgementalism and by people willing to listen, who encourage people to tell their own stories rather than trying to push the Bible story on them. Sanders surveys a range of felt needs in Australian society that could thus be openings for the gospel.

The last few chapters flesh out the argument with case studies from Sanders' own ministry: her church plant Kaleidoscope, her marketplace ministry "Art for Justice" and her psychotherapeutic ministry "Art and Soul" (a course that involves teaching on life issues, painting and small group discussion), together with some other ways this ministry has reached needy people in Australia and inmates in some US prisons. The

honest accounts about people's journeys and the struggles of the Christian team members (for example, the struggle to avoid religious jargon) are very relevant.

There are some strong, even confrontational, claims here. Sanders is very critical of the average church's priorities: maintaining the systems (p. 11), focusing on numbers (p. 13). She insists that the church must engage the unchurched world.

Overall I found Sanders' book stimulating, provocative and inspiring. My only reservation is the patience required. How can we possibly reach a nation with just non-threatening missional conversations? It will take forever! Clearly Sanders' strategy will not be the whole answer. Yet such is the indifference to Christianity in our society that this may be the main place at least to begin.

Standing, R. (2008). *Re-Emerging Church: Strategies for Reaching a Returning Generation.* Abingdon, UK: The Bible Reading Fellowship.

Reviewed by Ron Jessop

Recently a friend told me about a conversation she had had with three women at a 40-year reunion. One shared she had had a baby out of wedlock, another that she had chosen to become a celibate lesbian since her forties and the third that she had had an affair. Each of the three stories had come from women of baby boomer age that had Christian faith 40 years earlier when they met at university, but no longer attended church.

If these three women returned to church searching for spiritual truths how would the church respond to them? It is this question, borne out of his sincere desire for people to have faith in Jesus, that Roger Standing addresses in his book *Re-emerging Church*: *Strategies for Reaching a Returning Generation*.

Aware of the reality that the baby boomer generation (those born 1946–1964) are approaching retirement and old age, Standing believes that during the next season of their lives, many boomers will begin to ask important and searching spiritual questions. He says, somewhat categorically, that "on a whim, baby boomers will return to church, seeking help in making sense of the questions with which they are beginning to engage."

Out of his concern that a bad or disappointing experience could well extinguish such a search, he seeks to provide resources that will enable traditional denominational churches to help them engage with the issues that are likely to surface as matters of sensitivity with Boomers who want to explore their Christian faith once more.

He does this by identifying nine issues, some of which include: the faith journey, a lifetime of ethical choices, institutional suspicion, distrust of authority, the impact of music and media, inclination to social justice and discipleship and conformity to Christ.

The main body of the book is taken up with a chapter devoted to each of the nine identified issues. In each chapter Standing provides a reflection on a biblical text related to the topic, a case study, a summary of issues arising from it, theological resources to dig deeper, suggestions for action, and finally a contemporary sociological snapshot, usually taken from studies related to the particular theme.

The author writes from a British context. In recognition of that, he acknowledges that data in countries such as the USA and Australia may have their own nuances. Readers not from a British context should be aware that the examples used in the case studies are all British, and thus may require some interpretive work in order to connect them with other contexts.

A strength of the book is the author's capacity to weave contemporary issues (e.g. homosexuality, co-habitation, and social justice) into his case studies and also to be honest regarding churches' potential reactions to returning boomers e.g. biblical and moral rigidity and judgementalism. The research update at the end of each issue and the descriptions of baby boomer culture are insightful.

The book is a helpful resource for churches seeking to prepare for and welcome baby boomers who are returning to the church "on a whim" in search of a renewal in connection with God. The author achieves his stated aim of providing resources that will equip traditional churches to respond positively to the return of the boomer generation that he foresees.

What sort of a reception any of the three women mentioned above would receive at a church in Australia I do not know. However, the possibility of a positive outcome would be greatly enhanced by a church willing to use Standing's book as a resource and put work into discussing and applying it in their local situation.

Walton, J. H. (2009). *The Lost World of Genesis One*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

Reviewed by Jozua van Otterloo

In *The Lost World of Genesis One*, John Walton, Wheaton College Professor of Old Testament studies and author of many related publications, presents a different exegesis of Genesis 1, which assists in engaging with the book of Genesis as well as with science. Walton argues that in order to remain true to the text, we should read it as the original author intended it in the context of his worldview. Therefore, for his exegesis of Genesis 1, he has reconstructed the ancient Near Eastern cosmology. Genesis 1 explained in light of this worldview provides new insight into how God is presented as the Creator. Walton successfully reclaims this topic for a Church that has grown weary of the creation-versus-science debate. He also encourages Christian scientists by his positive engagement with the modern sciences.

The book is arranged as a series of eighteen propositions, each discussed in separate, short chapters. It also comprises an introductory chapter as well as a summary and conclusions section followed by a list of frequently asked questions. The propositions can be grouped in two clusters: (a) the ancient Near Eastern worldview and how Genesis 1 should be interpreted according to this view (propositions 1–11); (b) its relationship to other interpretations, the origins debate and science education (propositions 12–18).

In proposition 1 Walton argues that Genesis 1 reflects ancient cosmology and therefore, that it cannot be literally interpreted according to our modern-day materialistic understanding. Various biblical imageries cannot be interpreted literally, e.g. the location of thought and emotions in the various organs of the human body (heart, kidneys, and bowels). He explains in proposition 2 that ancient cosmology is

focused on the functions of the created order rather than its material origins. The discussion turns back to the text of Genesis 1 and its interpretation in propositions 3–6. With regards to Genesis 1:1, the word "create" (Hebrew: bārā') is used for defining and assigning functions rather than material creation (proposition 3). Without denying this important theological principle, Walton points out that "create" is not used in the Old Testament to introduce material *creatio ex nihilo*. Proposition 4 concerns the beginning state in Genesis 1:2 and the meaning of *tōhû* and *bōhû* (traditionally: "empty" and "formless"), which is better understood as a state of ontological non-existence without any defined functions. The main functions (time, weather, and food) were established on days one to three (proposition 5); these functions are of importance to human sustenance in the ancient worldview. The installment of the functionaries—those that carry out these functions or inhabit the various spaces—occurred on days four to six (proposition 6). In propositions 7–9 Walton elaborates on his view of Genesis 1 as a temple text by providing new insight that it is the Sabbath that actually highlights God's sovereignty over all of creation. Therefore, the seventh day should not be regarded as an anti-climax in the creation account. God rests in his temple as a ruler rests on his throne (proposition 7). The divine temple then, is the entire cosmos (proposition 8); consequently, Genesis 1 can be read as the inauguration of the cosmos as God's temple (proposition 9). Genesis 1 parallels ancient Near Eastern temple inauguration texts. Propositions 10 and 11 summarise the functional exegesis of Genesis 1 as a 'face-value' interpretation of the biblical account.

Walton compares his exegesis of Genesis 1 with other interpretations and discusses how it relates to science in the second section of the book. In proposition 12 he discusses the main ideas of, as well as the issues with, the various interpretations of Genesis 1 that assume a material creation, which in Walton's eyes do justice to neither the biblical account nor science. He then distinguishes the physical scientific origins account from the metaphysical biblical one (proposition 13); science covers the physical level of nature, and Scripture focuses on the metaphysical level of divine purpose or teleology. This purpose, however, cannot be detected by the current scientific method. Teleology highlights the interrelationship between God's roles as creator and sustainer (proposition 14), where God is neither just the instigator of an automated universe (deism) nor a constantly intervening micro-manager. The debates about Intelligent Design and scientific explanations of origins are ultimately about finding the purpose of creation (proposition 15); the scientific models can be understood in biblical terms of purpose (proposition 16). Walton argues that this viewpoint of Genesis 1 does justice to both Scripture and science (proposition 17). Lastly, he proposes that scientific models should be communicated in the education sector without any metaphysical or teleological inferences, thus criticising both creationists and materialists for trying to introduce their views in the science classes (proposition 18).

This work is a form of framework exegesis of Genesis 1; the literary assessment is weighed heavily in the interpretation. However, it offers more than literary ideas alone; it maintains the literal cosmology as presented in Genesis. Walton's effort of reconstructing the worldview of the original author is commendable and provides us with renewed insight about the text's original purpose and perspective. As such, Walton's exegesis increases the pertinence of Genesis again for those appreciating modern scientific theories. Additionally, it may provide a tool for the Christian to reconcile scientific ideas with his faith.

There are a few theological issues with this book, however, of which the reader should be aware, and which, hopefully, the author will follow up. Although Walton explains the occurrence of "death" before the Fall, it still requires further theological elaboration. Furthermore, concerning the creation of humanity, he regards Adam and Eve solely as archetypes of humanity and does not touch on the historicity of the first human pair. The historical creation of Adam and Eve, however, is related to the important doctrines of humanity and sin. Man was created in the image of God; when did God imprint his image? Did God, then, imprint his image on an individual or an entire group belonging to one of the hominid species? What about the fall of Adam and the restoration under the second Adam, Christ? After all, there is only *one* Christ and He is more than an archetype.

Though the author tries to remain respectful towards the various interpretation models, his frustration with young earth creationists is evident as he treats them quite harshly for using the biblical text for overreaching scientific claims. If the purpose of this book is to reconcile conservative Evangelicals and scientists with one another, a milder attitude may be more profitable towards people who, regardless of their interpretation, nevertheless value Scripture as God's word.

Overall, I think Walton is successful in communicating his message and arguments to his audience comprising the "educated layperson", pastors, and science teachers without making it too simplistic for a more academic readership. He provides new insight into Genesis 1, creating a new opportunity to talk again about God as the Creator for a Church that has grown weary of the creation-versus-science debate. His engagement with the modern sciences provides an encouragement to Christian scientists; it also removes some of the biggest arguments of the radical New Atheism movement. Furthermore, the ancient Near Eastern worldview presented here may provide additional insights for the study of the Pentateuch as a whole. Therefore, I highly recommend this book as a resource for ministry; it can be used both as conceptual background reading for Genesis 1 and the Pentateuch, and as a tool to help people reconcile their faith with modern scientific insights.

Ward, K. R. (2014). *Losing Our Religion? Changing Patterns of Believing and Belonging in Secular Western Societies*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Reviewed by Dr Jon K. Newton

When I was growing up in 1950s and 1960s Australia, almost everyone was a nominal Christian, even if most didn't attend church regularly, and the answer to the question "What's your religion?" was along the lines of "Catholic", "Methodist" and especially, "C of E" (Anglican). Today the latest Australian census shows only 61% nominating as Christian and the figures for "No Religion" and non-Christian religions are booming. Church attendance is in decline as a percentage. It is not quite the confirmation of the secularization thesis, which forecasts the inevitable demise of religion in general, but it is disturbing nonetheless for all Christian believers.

Kevin Ward's new book *Losing Our Religion?* is based largely on New Zealand research, and the two countries can be quite different in many ways, but it still contains a lot of intelligent and relevant analysis for the contemporary Australian church scene. It also provides a model for researching trends in church life in any country, drawing on

census statistics and interchurch surveys in several nations (pp. 2–11) as well as the author's own research, especially focused on four different churches in Christchurch (New Zealand's second largest city): two Baptist churches (one charismatic, one conservative), a liberal Presbyterian church and a "middle of the road" traditional Anglican church (pp. 35–52).

The book attempts quite an ambitious task of critically investigating a whole range of views about the progress and future of Christian churches, such as to what extent acceptance of the charismatic movement influenced the growth of "mainline" churches (Chapter 5), to what extent liberal theology weakens the health and growth of churches and generally how big a crisis the church in western countries like New Zealand is currently facing.

Ward honestly faces the fact that church affiliation and attendance in the English-speaking world has been steadily declining at least since the 1960s (pp. 3–5). For New Zealand, statistics "indicate some erosion of Christian profession and membership prior to the 1960s, but since then it has been much more marked" (p. 5), with the greatest decline being in the mainstream Protestant denominations (Chapter 4). Pentecostal and some conservative groups have grown or maintained their position (pp. 6–10), but largely at the expense of more traditional churches with people returning to a form of the faith they were instructed in as children, perhaps this time at a megachurch (pp. 96–99). Full-on conversions to Christian faith are rare, as demonstrated not only by Ward's personal research but larger-scale surveys, including Australia's NCLS (pp. 89–94). Church members are increasingly disproportionately older people, which also suggests future decline (pp. 10–11), and confirms that the problem is in "the generations that reached adulthood during and after the decade of the 1960s" (p. 11). Worldwide, while the number of Christians has increased steadily, as a percentage of population Christianity has declined (34% down to 32% from 1960 to 2010) (p. 6).

Among the interesting trends discussed by Ward, however, are the continuing interest in "spirituality" and adherence to religious beliefs even when Christian affiliations are declining (Chapter 2), though not necessarily in the form of orthodox Christian creeds or practices (pp. 114–124); the overall trend away from all kinds of institutional participation (affecting political party memberships and even sporting bodies) (pp. 112–113, 116); a range of recent experiments in new forms of church (Chapters 8–9); the effect of large-scale migration on Christianity in New Zealand (Chapter 10); and the increasing adherence to "replacements" for religion such as sport and ANZAC day (Chapters 11–12). We live in an era of much greater individualism, privatism, pluralism, relativism, anti-institutionalism, loss of local community ties, changing patterns in marriage and family life and greater emphasis on paid work especially for women (pp. 18–29).

Ward urges that we cannot just do Christianity the way we always did. The world is changing; society is changing. If even rugby, New Zealand's main sporting code, is suffering loss of participant numbers (pp. 204–212), the issue is surely more than secularization. Rather we are seeing a massive shift in how our society functions (pp. 215–224). This will require a more profound reflection and adjustment by Christians, though without abandoning core beliefs and practices of the Faith—the liberal answer is a recipe for even worse decline. If Ward is right that the abandonment of church was not because of "disagreement over belief, but rather because of a disengagement from the way they were being asked to belong" (p. 100), then something more drastic may be

needed in terms of church structures since, "belonging needs to happen before believing can occur" (p. 101). As Ward argues, "[w]e need to create new forms of church that are not shaped by the values and forms of Christendom but by a genuine mission encounter between the gospel and culture of twenty-first century…" (p. 103), forms that abandon clerical control and an institutional church that demands loyalty instead of serving people (pp. 103–106). Perhaps even more importantly, Christianity needs to adapt to the much more mobile, individualistic, "networks of interest" that characterise relationships in a fragmented, pluralistic society built around telecommunication, the internet and the car (pp. 147–149). The result of such shifts may be a much less visible and demanding, much more diverse and pervasive, Christian presence.

However, as Ward rightly cautions, the church is not just a social entity. It needs to continue to express its identity as the Body of Christ and the people of God. Hence such radical moves as "Emerging Church" may not in fact be a genuine form of church if they reject the rest of the Body. Ward is critical of such developments, including ethnic churches, on theological grounds, even though they may in some ways express the new forms he calls for elsewhere (Chapter 9).

So what conclusions can we draw? Certainly churches that are theologically conservative but adaptable in terms of form and presentation will do better than others, as Ward's own research illustrated (pp. 50–52). But overall the trend is still downward except for a rather vague spirituality expressed in the ANZAC myth and folk spirituality. The most disappointing thing in this book was the lack of any sure path for a fully Christian regeneration, but perhaps I am expecting too much. Certainly pastors and other Christians would do well to think seriously about the ideas here.

Woodward, J. R. (2012). *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

Reviewed by Dr Darren Cronshaw

Creating a Missional Culture is a timely book on congregational culture and collaborative leadership. There is a growing dissatisfaction with hierarchical models of leadership that major on control, stunt the imagination, silence dissent and are slow to welcome new leaders. That is not just an unfair caricature. In my denominational tribe, the Baptist Union of Victoria, the National Church Life Survey shows us we are twice as slow as the national average to welcome newcomers into leadership who have been around less than five years, and we are less likely to appoint younger people as leaders! Moreover, for all our talk of teams, almost every church has a solo or senior pastor. Where is our experimentation with other models of leadership, or do we want to limit experimentation to worship styles? Polycentric leadership makes more sense than hierarchical leadership, especially in a networked digital age—let alone also postmodern and post-Christendom—when leaders function mutually through collaboration, maintain cohesion through relationship, and rotate leadership functions around a team. In my local context at AuburnLife, we are exploring how to cooperate with what God is doing in our neighbourhood and how to best reimagine our staffing and leadership. We have things to learn from this book.

J.R. Woodward is a church planter who cofounded Kairos Los Angeles and the Ecclesia Network, a relational network for missional churches to dream together and

share resources. Woodward's writing is far from mere theory—he has experimented with and trialled what he teaches.

The thesis of the book is that church culture is more important than strategies and plans. Edgar Schein suggests that leaders create culture while managers act within culture. Woodward explains that you can discern a church's "cultural web" through its language, rituals, institutions, ethics, and narratives. For example, he says a church's narrative is its guiding story that answers the question "What is God's calling for our church?"

The encouragement of the book is to identify and release a team of equippers in a church with different focal concerns. Woodward adds to the small but growing library of books (alongside Alan Hirsch's *Permanent Revolution* and Neil Cole's *Primal Fire*) that unpack the potential of the Ephesians 4:11-13 APEST leadership matrix. Woodward summarises the different roles as:

- Apostle (dream awakener), focusing us on living out our calling and cultivating a discipleship ethos.
- Prophet (heart awakener), focusing us on pursuing God's shalom and calling the church to a new social order and standing with the marginalised.
- Evangelist (storyteller), focusing us on incarnating the good news and connecting with people who ache for a better world.
- Pastor (soul healer), focusing us on seeking wholeness and holiness with life-giving spirituality and reconciliation.
- Teacher (light giver), focusing us on inhabiting and being mastered by the sacred text and living out God's story.

Woodward upholds a high view of the mission of the whole people of God, but also a high view of the need for equippers across this spectrum of APEST roles to cultivate a healthy missional culture; including its thriving environment, liberating environment, welcoming environment, healing environment, and learning environment.

Jesus embodied each of these aspects of fostering the kingdom of God—as an Apostolic sender, prophetic questioner, evangelistic bridge-builder, pastoral mercy-giver, and teacher who applied Scripture to help people love God and people more. I seek to reflect Jesus as a leader in my church, but I am not Jesus. I need others around me who can reflect the breadth of what Jesus wants to do in us. It's more like a jazz band than a solo performance, or geese who fly in a V but rotate the point position (see Woodward's interview http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/april/creating-missional-culture-interview-with-jr-woodward.html).

Woodward has convinced me that we need different kinds of leaders, and a polycentric leadership. His argument is that a collaborative approach is healthier and less isolating; better reflects a Trinitarian God of community, consensus and mutual participation; leaves control with God where it belongs and relegates leaders as under-shepherds who work together:

> If missional leadership is about joining God and helping people and communities to live up to their sacred potential—living lives of daily worship to God, bringing the reality of the kingdom to bear at home, at work, in the neighbourhood and within the congregation—then leading *in* community, in the round, with God at the centre might be a good way to approach leadership. (p. 79)

A critique of the book is that although it preaches against the heroic approach to leadership, some of the stories were of apostolic superstars. I would love to read more local and accessible stories of people functioning apostolically and prophetically, and love to read more about Woodward's application.

The book includes practical steps for exploring and implementing a polycentric model. Woodward suggests forming "equipper guilds" to gather different types of leaders together (e.g., gather the evangelists as a learning community). He suggests creating more co-pastors rather than senior pastors. His advice to leadership teams is to write the senior pastor's role and discuss how to share those responsibilities rather than presuming they need one person, or rotate them around. Working on some projects together as a team, such as worship and teaching rosters, might create a more balanced and creative liturgical year anyway. There are questionnaires and tables in the appendices that help people discern their best fit, reminding me that sharing leadership means sharing functions but does not mean that everyone has to preach. The important thing is to release people to do what they do well and to be open to the creativity that may foster. G K Chesterton's words were helpful: "The more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it has established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild" (p. 197).

This is an excellent and practical handbook for church leaders and planters, and those responsible for training and consulting them, when they are ready to explore and implement more collaborative approaches to leadership around an APEST model, not just to tinker with organisational restructuring but with the intention of creating missional culture. (Supplementary resources are accessible at http://jrwoodward.net).

HARVEST BIBLE COLLEGE
2015 RESEARCH CONFERENCE
August 27-28

Church and Ministry: A Contemporary Voice

Harvest Bible College will be hosting its fifth research conference "**Church and Ministry: a Contemporary Voice**" on August 27-28, 2015.

Keynote Speakers: Dr Graham Hill (Vice Principal (Communications), Morling College) & Dr Peter Thein (Vice Principal & Head of Missions, Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) will stimulate you to consider a wide range of contemporary perspectives on the church and Christian ministry.

Location: Harvest Bible College, 1 Keith Campbell Court, Scoresby VIC
Contact: Dr Jon Newton jnewton@harvest.edu.au


Call for Papers – submission deadline: 15th June 2015

Without wanting to limit the range of topics, we would ask all prospective presenters to relate their proposed papers to the conference theme. You might especially consider something along these lines:

- New contemporary voices and perspectives on church and mission.
- New expressions of church and ministry.
- Relating church and mission to current developments in culture and society in Western and Non-Western contexts.

Paper proposals will be evaluated by the Research Committee before the program is finalised.

Submitting a Paper Proposal: If you have some research-based ideas you'd like to share as a result of your master's or doctoral studies or other experience, we'd love you to put forward a proposal for a paper at the conference. Proposals should be around 200 words in length and should contain:

- A working title
- A clear description of the ideas and arguments you will present.
- Details of you as presenter, including previous and current studies and presentation experience.

Please send your proposal to Dr Jon Newton, Harvest Bible College, PO BOX 9183, Scoresby, VIC 3179 or to jnewton@harvest.edu.au