

Editorial

Mission and Spirituality

By Darren Cronshaw

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This fourth issue of the **Australian Journal of Mission** focuses on mission and spirituality. It brings together the reflections of activists and academics, pastors and teachers. In the form of questions, the different contributions begin to explore, "What is spirituality from a mission perspective, and mission from the perspective of spirituality?", "How can the church communicate ancient spirituality to a spiritually hungry society?", "How do different church traditions express their spirituality and mission?" and "How is spirituality related to reconciliation?" These are crucial questions and I trust you will enjoy grappling with the articles and be inspired to apply their lessons in your context.

Newbigin's cross spirituality

Lesslie Newbigin was a strategic missiologist who put the Western world on the mission agenda, but was also committed to nurturing a sustaining missionary spirituality. He bemoaned the dominance of the "Pilgrim's Progress Model" of the Christian life that seeks to escape from the world to be saved and spiritually nourished. The other caricature is the "Jonah Model" where the servant, who sometimes runs away, is sent into the city and its turmoil. Both have biblical precedents, but authentic spirituality follows Jesus in embracing both dependence on God and involvement in the world. Newbigin calls this the "Cross Model" that shows total identification with the world and radical separation from it.ⁱ

Healthy missionary spirituality embraces both going out in service to the world and drawing close to God's Spirit in prayer. It has an outer expression that monastic-types can ignore but also an inner expression that activist-types can forget. Neither move (inner or outer) is sufficient on its own; both inform and sustain the other. An inner without an outer move is self-indulgent; an outer move without an inner move is unsustainable.

Inner reflection and outer service

Other writers have helped reinforce this idea for me. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, for example, maintain that a life of outer active service is the best context for inner reflective practices: 'one worships more fully, prays more deeply, and studies more diligently when all are done in the context of a life of action'.ⁱⁱ Thomas Merton viewed his spiritual direction and monasticism as critical to his prophetic ministry: 'the monk abandons the world only in order to listen to the deepest and most neglected voices that proceed from its inner depth'.ⁱⁱⁱ

A balanced spirituality integrates inner and outer spirituality. For me, this integration is the essence of missionary spirituality. It is why I have been thrilled to edit this edition on mission and spirituality. Contributions draw on analyses of contemporary spirituality, Bonhoeffer, Sisters of Mercy, Pentecostal spirituality, everyday spirituality and indigenous holiness spirituality, as well as treatments of reconciliation and the affects of Christendom on theology.

Deep spirituality

Stuart Devenish considers the decline and marginalisation of the church in the West and the concurrent increased popularity of spirituality. For this post-Christian but also post-secular context, he suggests that ancient spirituality and classical discipleship is what is needed. Devenish appeals for mission to be grounded in cultural analysis and counter-cultural living, a reclaimed confidence in the gospel and a refocused identity as church. In an era when spirituality can mean anything and

nothing, it is appropriate to reclaim and reform a distinctly Christian and missionary approach to spirituality.

Bonhoeffer spirituality

Michael Duncan challenges the view that spirituality is all about 'what's in it for me'. Drawing on Bonhoeffer, he outlines a spirituality for the storms of life and mission. He proposes a spirituality that is collective, recognising we need each other; horizontal, including transparency and willingness to give and receive rebuke; vertical, grounded in hearing from God through Scripture; engaged, embracing all of life; freedom, to leave room for initiative; and a spirituality of loss and gain. Bonhoeffer and Duncan know the challenges of storms and it is encouraging to read their anchor points for perseverance in faith.

Sisters of Mercy

Laura Doherty describes the Sisters of Mercy involvement in Pakistan since 1985 and with the people of East Timor since 1988. They express an active and public ministry responding to the needs of the poor. Doherty offers a biblical theology of "mercy" and recounts the charism of founder Catherine McAuley, which has helped to renew the Sisters of Mercy. McAuley notably demonstrated pragmatic initiative, reliance on God, identification with the cross and service to the neighbour as if to Christ. Following the urging of Vatican II to be renewed through a fresh look at Scripture and your organisation's founder was obviously inspiring for Doherty and suggests principles for mission renewal elsewhere.

Pentecostal spirituality

Angelo Cettolin offers a window into Pentecostal history, theology and spirituality through the lens of a study of Assemblies of God pastors. He discovered they show a decrease in classical Pentecostal practices in church services but a growing involvement in community services and outreach. The movement is renewing and refocusing itself, seeking to be faithful to their radical roots yet developing more relevant forms for the 21st -century. Cettolin is optimistic about what these trends mean for the ongoing growth of churches and their mission.

Emerging spirituality

Darren Cronshaw offers a case study of Solace as an emerging church grappling with mission and spirituality in contemporary society. This new group was founded to create space for theological questioning and interactive worship for all ages and all stages of faith. Their own book *Remaking*, also reviewed below, and seven 'ways' of Jesus-centred spirituality are key tools they have developed for nurturing people for their mission in everyday life. Solace is an inspiring example of a congregation seeking to base mission in a spirituality of everyday life and ground spirituality in service.

Indigenous holiness spirituality

Glen O'Brien tells the inspiring story of Doug and Maysie Pinch and their mission efforts "among the wattles" with the Nazarene Mission to the Bandjalong in northern NSW. This indigenous group were particularly receptive to teaching of holiness as a second work of grace. It offered an efficacy, empowerment or enlivening of their life force for which O'Brien suggests Aboriginal people are particularly open. Significantly, the message was adopted in culturally appropriate ways and the mission developed strong indigenous leadership.

Reconciliation

Tim McCowan follows up on some "Sorry Business" after Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology and in the context of widespread prejudice and confusion about what reconciliation means for non-indigenous Australians. McCowan appeals for congregations to contribute to and learn from Aboriginal reconciliation. He discusses the importance of relationships more than words, truth-telling about ongoing discrimination, listening and walking together, rediscovering the church's political voice, and the spiritual transformation of people that can occur through engaging reconciliation efforts.

Spirituality and mission without attending to justice issues, primarily in our context reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, is incomplete.

Impact of Christendom

Doug Hynd joins the critique of Christendom, especially questioning its influence on theology. Christendom brought an imposition of Christianity by birth, marginalised domestic missiology, gave ministry away from the people of God and made it a predominantly clergy role, and generally privatised religion. Theologically, Hynd traces how Christendom focused on the “killing” of Jesus and the message of the cross as retribution. It also produced the Nicene and other creeds which teach truth about God’s nature and the death of Christ but are “loudly” silent about Jesus’ subversive life and teaching. They help get belief right but say little about community belonging and Christlike behaviour. This article was not focused on mission and spirituality, though we need more reflection on what shape mission and spirituality will take in a post-Christendom context and Hynd offers some clues from Tim Winton’s wonderful book *The Turning*.

Reviews

ReMaking, a collaborative project of Solace edited by Stuart Davey, is a compilation of stories, artwork, exercises and reflections on integrating faith into everyday life.

Do Christians Know How to be Spiritual by John Drane discusses how spirituality is perceived in the Western world today from mystical practices through to friendship and food, and appropriate missional responses to invite people to experience and journey with God.

Mission-Shaped Spirituality by Susan Hope is an appeal for perceptive watching for where God is at work to join in what God is doing, knowing God’s love and sustaining as a foundation for mission.

The New Believers by Rachael Kohn explores diverse ways people are reshaping their thinking about God, from Buddhism to environmentalism, the self-help movement to new readings of the Bible.

Israel and the Nations, by James Okoye is an introductory mission theology of the Old Testament examining the universality of salvation, the role of community-in-mission and centripetal and centrifugal mission.

Walking in the Light, by Colin Reed is a study of the East African revival and the role of CMS Australian missionaries, and also the influence of their reports on the sending churches in Australia.

Emerging Down Under by Ray Simpson and Brent Lyons-Lee is a conversation about spirituality, justice and church from Celtic and Australian perspectives, complete with congregational examples and prayers.

The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Melanesia and Micronesia, 1850-1875 Vol 2, by Ralph Wiltgen is a detailed account of missionaries in the region and their challenges of communication .

The next edition of AJMS will focus on public theology, drawing mainly on a range of excellent papers from the recent Australian Association of Mission Studies & Public and Contextual Theology conference ‘Christian Mission in the Public Square’, hosted at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. I was at the conference, enjoyed the stimulation of the papers and remember with fond memories the conversations over meals and drinks.

This edition’s topic of mission and spirituality is a critical topic for mission today. Thankyou to the thoughtful writers and the editorial committee for their teamwork and editing in pulling this together.

I conclude by citing a prayer by the Australian contemplative activist Michael Leunig. Leunig beautifully voices the need for action grounded in contemplation and spirituality expressed in working for a better world:

Dear God,

We give thanks for places of simplicity and peace. Let us find such a place within ourselves.
We give thanks for places of refuge and beauty. Let us find such a place within ourselves.
We give thanks for places of nature's truth and freedom, of joy, inspiration and renewal, places
where all creatures may find acceptance and belonging.
Let us search for these places: in the world, in ourselves and in others.
Let us restore them.
Let us strengthen and protect them and let us create them.
May we mend this outer world according to the truth of our inner life and may our souls be
shaped and nourished by nature's eternal wisdom.^{iv}

Christianity's re-discovery of its deep spirituality as a likely key to missional effectiveness in Australian society.

Abstract

In this paper the author addresses the question of how Christians might carry out effective mission in Australia. In order to get to the heart of this issue he asks where the emphasis for mission should lie: gospel, or church, or culture? Four basic theses are proposed: (1) that Australians outside the church are genuinely interested in spirituality; (2) that the re-discovery of Christians' own authentic and deep-seated spirituality is an urgent priority; (3) that the present culturally defined value towards spirituality means Christians should give priority to culture over gospel and church; & (4) that increased missional effectiveness will flow from bringing together the church which has rediscovered its deep spirituality focused on Christ, with a deep longing for something more which is the experience of everyday Australians.

... suppose a mountain has gold and no one is allowed to mine it any more; the water will bring it to light, the water which reaches into the silence of stone. It does the wanting.¹

Introduction

Commentators on Australian Christianity have been informing us since the 1970s that all is not well with the ship of the Church.¹ The church has experienced an exodus, but it has been an exodus *from*, not *to*, the Christian faith. Unlike Israel's joyful flight from oppression in Egypt into the promised land, the modern-day exodus has been away from a church whose confession, preaching and teachings no longer made sense in a predominantly scientific and rationalistic world. Most anti-pilgrims who exited the churches claimed to have experienced a new form of freedom as they escaped what they suspected were God's unreasonable demands on their lives. But in leaving God behind and subscribing to the values of consumerism, individualism and democracy which lay at the centre of Australian society, they were transitioning from the fading glory of established religion towards an all-too-fickle Western ideology, dependent upon changing public sentiment. It too would be called into question in a very short space of time.

The implications of this exodus have been profound for the Australian church. Prior to the 1970s it was a powerful majority institution which, although by no means united in confession or uniform in polity, nevertheless had the ear of every level of government and society. Yet, just 40 years on, the church has diminished significantly within Australian society and its capacity to speak into government decision-making and cultural concerns continues to wain.

Huston Smith wrote in the Introduction to his *The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition*,¹ that two great revolutions of the human spirit are unfolding in the exciting times in which we live. The first great revolution, says Smith, unfolded from the 17th century onwards, and generated the Enlightenment which bequeathed to the human community the fruits of science and technology. This, says Smith, was a destructive revolution which contained at its heart a secular, anti-God, worldview. The exodus from the Australian church from the 1970s onwards is nothing more than the unfolding of this first spiritual revolution in the public sphere. The second revolution is an opposite revolution which is expressed not simply reason and in critical judgement but a positive movement which makes room for the full spectrum of human thought via creativity, intuition and spirit. Smith's first revolution will be the focus on the first part of this paper, and the second revolution will be the focus of the second part of this paper.

A moment's pause will reveal that many of the central doctrines of the Christian faith taught by the churches were significantly undermined by noteworthy opinion-makers who drew upon the first revolution. Charles Darwin's nature-based explanation for the origin of species through gradual evolution neutralised the Christian belief in creation. Sigmund Freud's psychological explanation of the religious impulse belittled the *sensus divinitatus* commonly experienced by people everywhere, suggesting that it was nothing more than an *illusion*. The suggestion that religious sentiment was human need projected onto a non-existent father-figure neutralised the Christian doctrine of salvation. And Karl Marx's assertion that religion was simply another form of "power" exercised by governments

to ensure the compliance of the masses, appeared to neutralise religion in its social and structural forms.

Like the Egyptian sorcerers whose counterfeit serpents opposed Moses' miraculous signs intended to convince Pharaoh to "Let my people go!" (Exodus 8:8ff.); these masters of suspicion (as Paul Ricoeur termed them) devised the new and contrary creed of humanism for an increasingly secularised Western audience. It is no surprise then that religion in the social world, and in particular the Christian religion, entered a stage of social and cultural decay. If the Christianity's critics were not able to announce the death of the church, they were at least able to announce its irrelevance.

What then did the future hold for the church in Australia? Having lost confidence in its own gospel, mislaid its impulse towards mission, and lost large numbers of its communicants, it stands to reason that it began to deeply question its own reason-for-being. The eclipse of Christianity's belief-system, its dislocation within the broader Australian social and political life,¹ and Australians' diffidence about accepting conservative Christian morality, have in effect produced a disconnected Christian community in this country.

Granted, all our major cities boast a number of mega-churches whose ministry outreach, media impact and social welfare activities undoubtedly maintain a Christian presence in the culture. But for people not educated in Christian schools or who were not brought up in a church community, the ugly fact is that Christians are fast becoming yesterday's cultural leftovers. The American writer Craig van Gelder¹ stated that "the great new fact of our time" is that *Christian* America had become a mission field. The same can be said of Australia, where Christianity is under threat of being relegated to a cultural redundancy, an artefact from the past, a cultural myth which reemerges only in the fading symbols of Christmas and Easter, but not otherwise. In this Australia, generations of children grow up believing that Jesus is no different to the fabled Santa Claus, the aboriginal dreamtime or the Anzac spirit. Because the voice of the church has been silenced, no credible witness is allowed by the culture to offer a believable or noteworthy account of the Christian message.

Cultural shift

Yet with the turning of the wheel of time and the unstoppable flow of cultural shift, something of enormous significance is taking place in Australian society in the present moment. The postmodern cultural mood which pervades our world has delivered us into the *post-Christian* reality I have been exploring thus far. But the same cultural mood, which yesterday delivered us into a *post-Christian* reality and which has caused so much despair among church leaders and Christian believers, is today delivering us into a new *post-secular* reality. In the mystery of the timing of God, precisely at the point when the Australian church is at its lowest ebb, ordinary everyday Australians are now genuinely interested in spirituality and recognise it to be an irreducible part of their human existence. 'Body, Soul and Spirit' exhibitions, new age spirituality groups, the ubiquitous self-help resources in local bookshops, and a general sense of awakening to the mystery of existence, have convinced commentators that there is a spiritual revolution at work in our culture. All around us we can hear the creaking of metal and the shifting of tectonic plates as a form of spiritual re-enchantment is erupting in our culture under our very feet. This awakening has been variously referred to as a re-enchantment,¹ as rising tidal waters,¹ and as a new reformation.¹

Admittedly this has not *yet* meant a rise in interest in forms of spirituality which are identifiably Christian. But these developments alert us to the fact that no one in Australia today has to be told that they are *sexual* beings (i.e. they can experience intimacy within relationships), that they are *sentient* beings (i.e. that they have the capacity to reflect deeply on the meaning of their existence), and that they are *spiritual* beings (i.e. that they experience themselves to be surrounded by mystery). Rilke's poetic insight which heads this article informs us of the truth that there is a deep *wanting* somewhere deep in the hearts of many Australian people. Spirituality, despite it being an as-yet un-formed and un-defined phenomenon, has found a new appeal in the Australian psyche. The emergence of spirituality as a newly recognised value is not only a phenomenon within Australia, but is something which is emerging across key parts of the Western world. This is part of Smith's second and constructive revolution, something which he says is "undernoticed" but real.

One demonstration of how widespread this awakening to spirit is can be observed in the crusade undertaken by the evangelical spokesman for atheism, Professor Richard Dawkins of Oxford

University.¹ Dawkins is undoubtedly responding to what he asserts is the "superstition" of religious belief, and the flood of new forms of alternative spiritualities and subjectivities which are breaking out everywhere across the Western world. For Dawkins, renewed commitment to such scientifically unverifiable beliefs and practices is a retrograde step away from science and reason, towards the "unreasonable" and unknown. Yet despite Dawkins' success in giving atheists a united voice, the evidence is clear that people are seeking something in their lives which is profoundly life-centred and life-giving, and which lies beyond the claims of reason and science.

It is important for those with an eye for God's mission-agenda to notice how - precisely at a time when the Christian gospel appears to have little or no relevance to its hearers and when the church is at a *nullpunkt*¹ or end-point - somehow, almost out of nowhere, there is a slow but steady cultural shift which is revealing cracks in the secular city and showing vulnerabilities in the human heart. This **water-wash** is bringing to light an openness to the spiritual world of the supernatural and new possibilities involving the natural world (including the human), and may in fact be a precursor to a more general preparedness on the part of the average citizen to recognize in the gospel of Christ, precisely the form of resource which their own inner heart-cry demands. It is actually possible that institutional religion has gotten in the way of the dynamic of the life-giving gospel of Christ, and that only when the church in its institutional form undergoes a cultural eclipse may it be possible for the gospel to be seen and heard for what it is in itself. The critical issue for our churches and their leaders is how we read and understand these countervailing trends, and the kinds of responses we make. Are our churches *mission-ready*, and are we willing to change patterns of ministry away from the normative maintenance and management, to proclamation, discipleship and the induction of a new influx of excited converts into our midst?

1. A missiology of Western culture.

In his small but powerful book *Believing in the Future: toward a missiology of Western culture*,¹ David Bosch undertook a discussion of the systemic issues which confronted the Christian church in its attempts to do mission in the post-European world. At the time of his writing and before his untimely death, Bosch considered the discovery of a missiology of Western culture to be the number one priority for the Western church. He concluded his brief chapter by quoting the papal encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* 36, which reads, "Frequently our Churches are empty not because the Christian faith is unacceptable to the modern world, but because of the 'counter-witness of the believers and Christian communities failing to follow the model of Christ.'" Thus in the case of the Australian society, it may not be so much that Christian mission has been unsuccessful because postmodernity's "incredulity towards metanarratives" has prevented the church from preaching its metanarrative-laden gospel, but rather because, over time, Christians (institutional and individual) have drifted into complicity with Western *laissez faire* values, and come to love the world more than God. A commitment to consumerism and the good life on the part of contemporary Christians appears to have produced a compromised church which preaches a gospel it no longer believes and whose actions belie its true loyalty.

The church's desertion of its primary calling to mission can be seen as a theological problem, and Bosch attends to this when he says, "We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology, not just a theological agenda for mission; for theology, rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*."¹ But for my part I cannot help suspecting that the reason for the church's abdication of its missiological agenda is not theological but spiritual. I am inclined to agree with John Drane when he asks the question, "after a century of secularism, is it actually possible for Christians to be spiritual?"¹

2. Emergent spiritualities.

By now the influx into Australia of large numbers of adherents of the world's great religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, through migration is well known. A brief visit to Cabramatta and Auburn in Sydney, and Footscray and Dandenong in Melbourne, will demonstrate the social and religious fact that a variety of cultural groupings have made this country their home, and the religious forms they brought with them are flourishing on Australian soil. However, it is not these larger religious traditions I wish to point to. They cannot be said to be 'emergent', but it is important nevertheless to note their presence in Australian society because their flourishing subverts the earlier

secularisation theory which proclaimed the death of religion and the emergence of a new idealised religionless society.

Rather, I want to draw the reader's attention to the large number of less formal spiritualities which have taken hold of non-migrant consciousnesses in this country. Perhaps best known among these is the new age movement, which is a hybrid form of spirituality, representing a homogenised and sanitised form of Eastern religions (primarily Buddhism and Hinduism) for consumption by western seekers. And there are older forms of alternate spiritualities which were submerged during the Christian era, but which are now emerging into full daylight and becoming commonplace. Aspects of nature-based religious practices such as wicca and druidic rituals are growing in popularity, and resonate with Australians' growing concern to nurture mother earth (*Gaia*) to save it from a looming ecological disaster. Huxley's perennial philosophy belongs here. Aboriginal spiritualities play a part in this awakening to spirit, and influence the awareness of large numbers of people. Also growing in popularity is the new gnosticism, where the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, George Gurdjieff, Madam Blavatsky and others mix with ancient forms of teaching which have generated renewed interest in such non-canonical literature as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Judas* and the like.

Astrology, the Kabbalah, conspiracy theories, Body Mind Spirit events, crystals, seances, palm reading, fortune-telling and tantric sex - all older forms of folk-religion - are now making their way back into mainstream Australian society in a variety of forms. Such has been the pace of the emergence of these forms of spirituality, along with the new religious movements, that researchers have yet to catch up with the extent to which they have made their way into the public consciousness at large.

3. The focus of mission: gospel, church or culture?

Locating mission in any of the spheres of gospel, church or culture has implications for the kinds of mission which are actually implemented. The more evangelical among us are likely to make the gospel the focal point for mission, believing that proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ on a "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17) platform, represents the true substance of mission. In this understanding a Barthian-type paradigm of divine revelation, made known through the proclamation of the word, is what leads to the "obedience of faith." A vote for this form of mission is a vote for *missio Dei*, the God who calls humankind out from the highways and byways of lostness into a new place where they are reconciled to himself through faith in Christ.

The more classically-minded amongst us may want to make the church the focal point for mission. An ecclesio-centric model of mission has merit, because after all it is the church which is commissioned to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20), and it is "through the church" that God intends to make known his eternal purpose of salvation which he accomplished in Christ (Ephesians 3:10-11). Given these fixed points, it would seem that the church is the herald of God's plan of salvation, whose internal community life is characterised by the signs of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. But how is today's divided, demoralised, and dysfunctional church to present a credible witness to Christ, in a context where institutional forms of religion are treated with suspicion and incredulity by the general population? If spirituality can be said to be on the up in Australia generally, it can equally be said to be down in the churches. "The churches are seen by many as devoid of spirituality - indeed, even as a threat and an obstacle to a truly spiritual life."¹ Is it true perhaps, that the Australian church has brought God's name into disrepute, as the apostle Paul charged Jewish religion of doing? (Romans 2:24). No matter how loudly we shout or how carefully we construct our religious syllogisms, in the prevailing climate of scepticism towards power-based religious institutions in 21st-century Australia, it is likely that our missional effectiveness will continue to decline if we make the church the focus of mission.

But there is a further possibility of making culture of the focus for mission. The apostle Paul's contextualised preaching on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17:16ff.) is an example of recognizing a felt need within a culture and asking 'can-opener' questions. The inscription to the unknown God had stood from time immemorial in the public square of the city of Athens, and the nagging question, "Who is the unknown God?" must have crossed the minds of generations of Athenians. Paul purported to know who the unknown God was, and this new information provided not only Paul with an opportunity to preach the gospel of salvation, but also for the local populace to answer a long-held and deeply-entrenched question. Missiology as a science is becoming increasingly influential within the discipline of theology, not least because theology in Christendom-mode was tending towards

losing touch with the real world, and missiology's greatest attribute is that it understands culture and knows how to identify points-of-connection between gospel and culture. Anthony Gittens made the helpful observation that one can preach as much as one likes, but it is the *hearer* who controls much of the communication process. "Whatever is received, is received according to the capacity of the receiver."¹ Perhaps surprisingly Gittens' statement places culture rather than church as the focal point for mission, to the extent that it is not the church as the proclaimer of the gospel but culture as the hearer of the gospel which has priority.

This discussion does not seek to displace either gospel or church from the process of mission, but rather attempts to bring to awareness the fact that culture is an important 'player' in mission which is often overlooked by Christian leaders and strategists. It was the genius of the contribution of Lesslie Newbigin to alert the Western church to the fact that gospel and culture are co-equal and co-efficient categories in the process of mission. Culture, then, is not an enemy of mission to be despised or rejected, but as Donald McGavran made us aware, is actually the "bridge" across which the gospel crosses and makes its passage from church to society.

4. A missiological necessity: Christianity's rediscovery of its own spirituality.

In this penultimate section of the paper I want to suggest that, if the diagnosis I am proposing is correct, i.e. *if* spirituality can be said to be on the rise in Australian society generally, and can equally be said to be down in the churches - then it is a missional imperative for Christians and churches to rediscover the ancient and deep-seated spiritual pathway which lies at the core of the Christian faith. Further, I wish to suggest that there are two fundamental reasons why this is so, each having a significant flow-on effect in terms of Christian missional practice in the Western world.

Firstly, the church's rediscovery of its own deep-seated spirituality will enable it to re-found its own identity as "the eschatological community of salvation"¹ whose life and reason-for-being flows out of the crucifixion and resurrection of the person of Jesus Christ. Charles Kraft,¹ drawing upon Alan Tippett's patterns of change in religion and society,¹ has suggested that the Western church is in a demoralised and submerged phase because it is characterised by a "dual allegiance" to both God and to world. In order for a revitalisation to take place in the church's consciousness it must undergo a conversion experience which is likely to cause it to rediscover the validity and trustworthiness of the gospel of Christ, its role as intermediary between God and the world, and - despite the cost - to make a determination to reposition itself as the church in the world for Christ's sake. This process of revitalisation will not necessarily see the church restored to its privileged position vis-a-vis the State and its earlier prominence in society, but it will enable the church to rediscover its reason-for-being in the world and enable it to re-emerge with a fresh confidence, a renewed worship, a deepened sense of sacred perspective, and its purposeful existence before God and human beings.

Secondly, the church's rediscovery of its own deep-seated spirituality will enable it to re-claim confidence in its gospel, and provide a fresh wind of the Spirit's inspiration and energy to re-commence Christianity's three great tasks: (1) the worship of God, (2) bearing witness to the salvation of Christ and the presence of his kingdom, and (3) the making of saints. It is my assertion that effective witness (#2) flows out of a growing depth of worship or spirituality (#1) and results in a body of committed believers who are growing in their commitment to and understanding of their faith in Christ (#3).

In the case of Isaiah's commissioning as prophet to Israel, it was only possible for him to go out into mission after he had met with God and been fundamentally changed at some deep level of his being (Isaiah 6). So it is with the church today; Christian ministry is not some perfunctory activity performed in society alongside other co-equal vocations such as that of IT technician, schoolteacher, retailer and truck driver. On the contrary, ministry in Christ's name is a God-infused, counter-cultural calling which is invariably uncomfortable, confrontational, demanding and transformative. As anyone who has ever been in front-line ministry situations (formal or informal) knows, the practice of ministry (i.e. the doing part) always flows out of a necessarily prior relational encounter with God (i.e. the being part) which first changes the status of the God-related person from sinner to saint, and second changes their perspective on the world as the place where salvation takes place, and third, thrusts them out into the world to be involved in God's costly *missio Dei* activity of transformation and redemption.

However, one of the difficulties in speaking about spirituality in a Christian context is that the language of spirituality has yet to be adequately defined in a way which takes into account biblical revelation, the person of Jesus Christ, and the Christian faith-tradition (including the sacraments and worship life of the Church). The prevailing tendency among the spokespersons for the emerging discipline of spirituality is most commonly to speak of spirituality as a constitutive element of the human person in the world. Descriptors such as connectedness, a sense of mystery or the awareness of something or someone beyond - are frequently used. Christians would not disagree that there is an important place for the human person in the presence of God, and that the flipside of divine *revelation* must always allow for human *response*. But Christians have historically thought in terms of connectedness to God, the mystery of the love of Christ who was prepared to lay down his life for us, and to go beyond the generality of some un-formed awareness of being confronted by an unknown 'Other', towards the particularity and specificity that it is Jesus the God-Man who is the giver of the Spirit, whose indwelling presence is the ascended Christ's ongoing companion presence within us.

From a Christian perspective then, spirituality concerns itself with the ideas of connectedness, encounter, mystery, wonder, awe and terror; but these diffuse realities only find their substance when they are focused in the person of Jesus Christ, who is for us our mythical *hero* whose epic journey through the heavens and whose humiliation and death on the cross as a sacrificial lamb has produced a change in the fabric of the cosmos. Satan has been defeated, sin has been conquered, death has been destroyed, Christ has overcome these enemies which have opposed his reign, so that a new reality now exists in which a previously broken, disconnected and dysfunctional humanity is now restored to its creational balance through redemption. Those who previously dwelt "afar off" have now been brought near in order to share in God's hospitality, and even to share the life of the divine Being.

I suggest then that un-churched non-Christians who are on a re-ignited spiritual quest to understand their own existence and to make sense of the mystery they encounter in their everyday lives, are likely to respond incredibly positively to a spirituality which brings their own deep-seated longing into connection with the human-friendly loving-kindness that is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ. Is it possible that in a postmodern world where the structures of being have been redefined and some new *zeitgeist* (spirit of the age) is at work, that a resurrection can be the surprising outcome of what was thought to be the death of God, the death of church, and the death of Christianity? Mark C Taylor goes so far as to say that "postmodernism opens with a sense of irrevocable loss and incurable fault. This wound is inflicted by the overwhelming awareness of death - a death that 'begins with the death of God' and 'ends' with the death of ourselves."¹ Yet as Michael Jenkins has pointed out:

The death of God ... proved to be not the demise of the divine but merely the destruction of certain confessional and dogmatic cages in which we foolishly believed God to have been successfully imprisoned. Far from dying, God emerged from death unscathed while many all-too-sure-of-themselves systems of theological discourse perished. At the end of the day, the death-of-God movement of a generation ago has turned to serve as an iconoclastic movement on behalf of the worship of the theological endeavours of the church.¹

For Christians whose faith transforms death into resurrection, such concerns as the purported death of God and even the death of the church, are little more than ephemeral passing parades of human thought, here today and gone tomorrow. How appropriate that unbelievers in a post-church, post-secular era may be the very ones who remind the Christian church of the authenticity and vitality of its long-forgotten spirituality! It may be that as Jesus suggested, God is able to raise up from the stones "children for Abraham" (Matthew 3:9).

Seasonal shift

It would appear that a seasonal *shift* is occurring in Australian society in which a spiritually dry *El Nino* pattern is changing in favour of a spiritually fruitful *La Nina* season. Ours is a new time when Christianity has - for the first time in a long time - a new and exciting opportunity to bring out of its storehouses its treasures of salvation, spirituality, wisdom, goodness and hope, in order to make them available to the next generation, many of whom may actually want to receive them. But first the church must go on a quest of its own to rediscover the lost water-sources of its own spirituality and the significance of these "holy things for holy people" for itself. Only then is it possible to make their significance known to the broader Australian society which acknowledges its own need for a

spirituality which is part of the place where it resides, part of the times in which it lives, and part of its own existence in the world.

Huston Smith has diagnosed the times in which we live by suggesting that the first, disastrous revolution of the human spirit which resulted in the Enlightenment, the scientific method and the secular worldview is over. He also suggested that a *second, constructive revolution* is under way, where God has returned to centre stage and a new sense of spiritual vision is at work in the world. If Smith is correct in his diagnosis, this second revolution has strong implications for the way the church needs to function in the world, and the way that Christian ministry is actually done. Instead of focusing on structure and strategy aimed at the survival of the church as traditional organisation, ministry leaders will need to pay more attention to the dynamics of the faith as the Way of Jesus which is enlivened by the substance of the Spirit.

Given the changing times we live in, and Australians' reawakened interest in spirituality, it is likely that church leaders will need to make preparations for a new season of fruitful dissemination of a Jesus-spirituality, in the expectation of a new crop of conversions and a welcome influx of new believers into the Christian faith. If these new converts are to flood into our churches, leaders' attentions will need to change from maintenance and management to proclamation, discipleship and induction processes, while paying attention to Christian 'difference' rather than 'similarity' to Australian society/culture. This will require a change of Christian habit and attitude, which sees us moving away from the angry, reactionary, "ugly Christian"¹ who bristles and harangues over minor points of morality and dogma, towards a larger grace-filled attitude that reveals the presence of God in the world and is willing to demonstrate the "strange new word of the gospel"¹ by positively embodying its teachings within their words, acts, attitudes and aspirations.

Conclusion

In this article four basic theses have been proposed: (1) that Australians outside the church are genuinely interested in spirituality; (2) that the re-discovery of Christians' own authentic and deep-seated spirituality is an urgent priority; (3) that the present culturally defined value on spirituality means Christians should give priority to culture over gospel and church; & (4) that increased missional effectiveness will flow from bringing together the church which has rediscovered its deep spirituality focused on Christ, with a deep longing for something more which is the experience of everyday Australians. No one can of course assume that the church will not be shaken to its very core in this process of spiritual rediscovery, missional reframing and theological redefinition that will flow from this increased openness to the world. But as Rilke's poetry suggests, the new season of enlivened water of the Spirit that reaches into hidden places in both the world in the church, will bring to light new forms of wanting, where there was once only the silence of stone.

Bonhoeffer: Spirituality for the Storms
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The idea of sailing forth into the unknown world to face the riptides and challenges of life's high seas, is at the heart of a kind of 'moored' Christianity, where disciples can catch the wind of the Spirit, confident they can always get their horizontal, vertical and collective bearings.

Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline*, in his follow-up volume, *Streams of Living Water* is concerned about spirituality of the moored sort. In the foreword to the book, Martin Marty writes that this moored spirituality "has a harbor and an anchor, a home port from which one heads forth into the storms... [and] having a mooring does not mean getting to stay at home while the winds blow into the sails. It is knowing where the lighthouses and beacons are, where the harbor is into which to return for momentary retreat before the next sailing forth into the turmoil of the world."¹

Foster's spirituality is as much about 'retreatism' as it is activism. An exemplar of this moored spirituality, that speaks of home and harbor but also venturing forth, is Dietrich Bonhoeffer who lived in extremely turbulent times. Like millions before him Bonhoeffer found himself swept up in a whirlwind of colliding events in an era of scary unpredictability when Adolf Hitler was at centre stage. In the chaos of the Nazi storm Bonhoeffer found himself anchored to Jesus Christ and the living words of scripture and moored to the church.

From this confident and sure place he ventured out into the tempest, suffered and gained... (unfinished idea...gained what?). His surety in life comprised strands of spirituality that when woven together gave him an anchor rope to cling to. Such strands of hope are there for the weaving as we get our bearings and prepare to venture out.

A collective spirituality

Bonhoeffer in his doctoral work wrote, "Christ exists as community." In this he was not simply reducing the person of Christ to a sociological reality called the church. He was reminding us that God is not just intent on making new Christians but is making a church. When a person receives the gift of Jesus s/he also receives another gift, the gift of community. Christians are made for one another. It is Christ in us (plural) that is paramount. Elsewhere, Bonhoeffer wrote:

Our relation to God is not a "religious" relationship to the highest, most powerful, and best Being imaginable – that is not authentic transcendence – but our relationship to God is a new life in "existence for others," through participation in the being of Jesus. (Matthews,p.21).....This being with each other of the church community and its members through Christ always entails their being for each other.¹

In a commentary on Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the collective nature of our new life in Christ, Mark Divine writes, "Christ's call to discipleship sets the believer at once into relationship with other believers. Vital membership within the church, the body of Christ, with its privileges and responsibilities, belongs to the essential character of discipleship. None of this should surprise us when we consider that God created us for relationship from the beginning."¹

At one level, Bonhoeffer celebrated the distinctiveness of each person. He underlined individuality but he was opposed to the kind of individualism that gives an excessive regard to the individual. For those in Christ there is no place for independence but rather interdependence where one part needs the other. Bonhoeffer would have struggled with today's trend of a 'privatized faith' or 'churchless faith.' Nor would he have spoken in such terms as 'all you need Jesus.' Quite simply, he would have urged that we also need each other.

For Bonhoeffer, "ethics is done in communion with Christ *and one's fellowman* [italics: mine] – it is koinonia ethics."¹ Bonhoeffer writes, "decision and action can here no longer be delegated to the personal conscience of the individual."¹ Rather, "the Church is the place"¹ where one discovers what Christ is saying and doing, and where crucial decisions are made in a collaborative way with others.

What then might Bonhoeffer say to mission circles today? First, in light of the above, he would counter the temptation to 'go it alone' in mission. There is no place for the 'lone ranger' in mission. Autonomy

is not the Jesus way. Nor would he countenance the 'just me, my closest friends and God' mission groups. Rather, he would push for eclectic entities and missionary bands marked by irksome (don't understand this term) difference. Heterogeneity, not homogeneity, is the way of Jesus. Secondly, he would urge that these groups that scatter into mission (sodalities) also gather in authentic fellowship (modalities). In other words, he would not have endorsed a separation of these two as others have tended to do. *Life Together* precedes and proceeds from mission. More to the point, mission is doing Life Together.

This strand of spirituality has special relevance for mission amongst the postmodern generation today. Jimmy Long, in his book on how to reach this demographic, writes: "the change from an emphasis on self to an emphasis on community, or tribal group, is the primary characteristic of emerging postmodern generations."¹ They want to be adopted into a new family. For these seekers, belonging to a faith community precedes believing in Christ. Intuitively this generation knows that to be and remain loyal to Christ they will need the sustaining support of others. They appreciate that the 'me' will not survive without the 'we'.

A horizontal spirituality

This strand of spirituality which I call horizontal spirituality is finely interwoven with collective spirituality. Bonhoeffer is well known for lamenting the cheap grace he felt was prevalent in the state church of his day:

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting to day for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheap-jack's wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices... Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the Cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate... Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*.¹

He talks of baptism without discipline. In his *Life Together*, he writes: "Nothing can be more cruel than leniency which abandons another to their life of sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another back from their life of sin."¹ Survival on the frontlines in mission demands relationships marked by transparency, which may in some cases represent intrusion by others or submission to others. Bonhoeffer would worry about today's tendency in church and missional circles to 'just' accept another or anything. He would urge those in missions to urgently recapture the biblical picture of iron sharpening iron, so those in mission must sharpen one another (Proverbs 27:17). Slane argues that for Bonhoeffer this need for rebuke was all part of "strength training for the moral crucible."¹ One wonders if a return to this art of a healthy rebuke might arrest the alarming attrition rates in mission circles. Interestingly, emerging waves of missional activists are intuitively sensing the need for highly relational contexts for doing mission. This phenomenon has become known as the re-monking of mission or the *New Monasticism*.¹ Urban Neighbors of Hope (UNOH) is a classic example where workers come together on a regular basis and then scatter into needy neighbourhoods. Individually and collectively they are bound by certain disciplines and practices, one of them being the practice of rebuke.

A vertical spirituality

Bonhoeffer's spirituality was collective, horizontal but also vertical in that he had a high view of scripture. In his *Life Together* he underlines the discipline of meditation on the Bible: "We expose ourselves to the specific Word until it addresses us personally. And when we do this, we are doing no more than the simplest untutored Christian does every day; we read God's Word as God's Word for us."¹

The most promising method of prayer is to allow oneself to be guided by the word of the Scriptures, to pray on the basis of a word of Scripture. In this way we shall not become the victims of our own emptiness. Prayer means nothing else but the readiness and willingness to receive and appropriate the Word, and, what is more, to accept it in one's personal situation, particular tasks, decisions, sins, and temptations.¹

Bonhoeffer was fixated on the will of God and believed the way to discover this was to go back to the Bible. In one of his letters he confesses, "I believe the Bible alone is the answer to all our questions, and that we only need to ask persistently and with some humility in order to receive the answer from it."¹

He would be alarmed at the excessive seeking out of 'internal promptings and nudges' or 'guidance' in much of today's spirituality. Even though he believed in such guidance it was his belief that much of God's will is already evident to us in Scripture, and if only Christians would practice the art of meditating on it they would receive the divine guidance they seek. In his commentary on Bonhoeffer's concerns around guidance, Divine writes:

Bonhoeffer's understanding of the Spirit-led life and the will of God would seem to contrast sharply with current popular evangelical practice. The focus for Bonhoeffer falls squarely upon obedience to the word of God found in the Bible. As he stated, everything else had become so uncertain. God is not playing hide and seek with his will; he has revealed it to us in Holy Scripture.¹

Bonhoeffer would support any 'Back to the Bible' movement. He would be alarmed at the biblical illiteracy that marks many a mission band today. In the absence of a rigorous reading of scripture and self-examination in light of scripture, mission can so easily be hijacked by ideologies, philosophies, personal preferences, the 'spirit of the age' and so on. Our missionary band in Manila was at times sorely tempted to be guided, if not driven, by a horde of forces and ideas. For example, pragmatism and only doing what worked, or hedonism, that asked that we choose pleasure over pain, or cultural relativism that demanded we do things in a "Filipino" way, or emotivism, whereby we would only do that which we felt strongly about. More categories could be added to this list; suffice to say that even though these can inform decision making, they alone must not determine outcomes. Bonhoeffer's point is that the Bible must be the last word, if not the only word. But for that to be so, mission entities must join the 'Back to the Bible' movement.

A spirituality of engagement

For Bonhoeffer, the things [the penultimate] before the last [the ultimate] prepared the way for the Word of the Lord. Not surprisingly, therefore, Martin E Marty notes that it is this concern for the penultimate "[which] liberates him [Bonhoeffer] for the concern for the world. 1 Bonhoeffer writes:

God is not *free from man*, but *for man*. Christ is the Word of the freedom of God. God is "there," which is to say: not in eternal non-objectivity, but – let us say it with all due caution – "haveable," graspable in his Word within the Church.¹

There is a balance required between the spiritual life and what we do with it. Spirituality for its own sake, kept captive and not expressed in the practical, is of little worth. Similarly forcing spirituality on people when they are deprived of basic needs or freedoms strips this expression of its power. Bonhoeffer continues:

From this follows now something of decisive importance, that the penultimate must be preserved for the sake of the ultimate. Arbitrary destruction of the penultimate seriously harms the ultimate. When, for example, a human life is deprived of the conditions that are part of being human, the justification of such a life by grace and faith is at least seriously hindered, if not impossible. Concretely stated, slaves who have been deprived of control over their times that they can no longer hear the proclamation of God's word cannot be led by that word of God to a justifying faith.¹

Thus, for Bonhoeffer, everything in the world took on significance and it demanded his serious attention whether it was facing hunger in Berlin, racial segregation in America or the Jewish question in his own beloved Germany. The theologian, John Godsey, in reflecting on Bonhoeffer's work, argues that "hunger, injustice, loneliness, disorder – these are penultimate conditions which the Christian must continually seek to alleviate for the sake of the ultimate."¹

Keith Clements, helps us capture the sense of solidarity Bonhoeffer had with his real world:

This approach [that of Ultimate and Penultimate], Bonhoeffer makes clear, covers the whole

range of Christian social responsibility. Again, it is not difficult to detect the bearing of this upon his own strange form of responsibility at the time of writing. Instead of an out-and-out rejection of his country in the name of Christianity, he had indeed chosen a 'thoroughly penultimate human solidarity' in its fate, sufferings and guilt, identifying with it not in order to condone what was happening, but so that a responsible act might be undertaken which could preserve the country for the time when the final word of mercy could again be preached. This human continuity, in all its 'penultimacy' shared with all other human structures, was not yet to be written off in face of the ultimate....In other words, if divine grace is to be preached to man, humanity must at least be preserved in all its aspects – physical, mental, social and cultural – for the reception of that word. There is thus a rightful place for the 'natural', in which the way is prepared for the coming of the Lord.¹

Included in this lengthy quote from Clements are some helpful observations. First, Clements echoes Bonhoeffer's concern to see the world and its social realities as preparatory for the coming of the Lord. Bonhoeffer makes this point very clearly:

None of this excludes the task of preparing the way. It is, instead, a commission of immeasurable responsibility given to all who know about the coming of Jesus Christ. The hungry person needs bread, the homeless person needs shelter, the one deprived of rights needs justice, the lonely person needs community, the undisciplined one needs order, and the slave needs freedom. It would be blasphemy against God and our neighbor to leave the hungry unfed while saying that God is closest to those in deepest need. We break bread with the hungry and share our home with them for the sake of Christ's love, which belongs to the hungry as much as it does to us. If the hungry do not come to faith, the guilt falls on those who denied them bread. To bring bread to the hungry is preparing the way for the coming of grace.¹

The second observation gleaned from Clement's quote is that the penultimate was not to be 'written off' or demeaned when compared with the 'ultimate'. Bonhoeffer wanted to be of 'earthly use'. In no way did he want to be so heavenly minded (preoccupied with the ultimate) that he lost sight of the things of earth. "Bonhoeffer as an ethicist," writes the German Theologian Huntemann, "was concerned above all with the immediate significance of the Christian faith amidst the dangers and uncertainties of the time in which he lived."¹ In other words, Bonhoeffer had a spirituality that embraced all aspects of human service - be they small or large, physical or otherwise, preparatory or ultimately transformative. Feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, proving care to the aged are just as 'spiritual' as seeing someone receive and accept justification by grace through faith. Every act has integrity in its own right and is not just a means for something more 'spiritual'.

There is no better way to illustrate the fact that every act has integrity than through the art of story telling; for example, this one about told by Tony Campolo about bishop Desmond Tutu:

He [Tutu] told me that in the days of apartheid, when a black person met a white person on the sidewalk, the black person was expected to step off the pavement into the gutter to allow the white person to pass, giving the white person this gesture of respect., "One day," the bishop told me, "when I was just a little boy, my mother and I were walking down the street when a tall white man, dressed in a black suit, came toward us. Before my mother and I could step off the sidewalk, as was expected of us, this man stepped off the sidewalk and, as my mother and I passed, tipped his hat in a gesture of respect to her!" The bishop said, "I was more than surprised at what had happened and I asked my mother, 'Why did that white man do that?' My mother explained, 'He's an Anglican priest. He's a man of God, that's, why he did it.'" "When she told me that he was an Anglican priest," said Bishop Tutu, "I decided there and then that I wanted to be an Anglican priest too. And what is more, I wanted to be a man of God."¹

Some years later, Tutu became a follower of Jesus and eventually an Anglican priest. But where did it all start? Someone stepped off the sidewalk and tipped his hat. This was a natural physical act and it preceded the latter spiritual dimension. In this instance physicality came before spirituality. The

penultimate preceded but made possible the ultimate. Tutu never lost sight of the significance of the penultimate as the following true story demonstrates:

While we were living in Melbourne I heard the story of Jenny. She had been born with a cleft-palate. She had several operations but these had only succeeded in worsening the problem. Her face was twisted and disfigured and saliva would often dribble uncontrollably from her open mouth. She was cruelly teased at school so now she not only had scars on her face but on her soul. She loved her parents but unfortunately her parents did not love each other and divorced. On her 21st birthday she waited for her father to show up, perhaps to give her a present or at least a hug. He didn't show. The following night she went to a Christian party and while walking home was forcibly taken and gang raped. When she got to her early 20s she looked bad, felt bad; she was physically and emotionally crippled.

Some time later Jenny was invited to a Christian rally in the heart of Melbourne. She didn't really want to go but changed her mind at the last minute. She arrived late and couldn't locate her friends. Suddenly ushers pushed her and others to the side so the guest speakers could make their way to the platform. As the famous guest speaker walked down the peopled corridor he noticed Jenny. He walked up to her and stood in front of her. He then said to her, "I notice you are in so much pain." Tears welled up in Jenny's eyes. He asked if she would like to accompany him to the platform and sit with him. All she could do was stammer out a "Yes." For the rest of the night she sat next to him and this was the beginning of her healing. The ultimate for Jenny was her healing, but what that preceded it, was someone offering her a place to sit.

A spirituality of freedom

At the heart of Bonhoeffer's ethic of discipleship is a call to be a people of initiative: to be disciples who unapologetically and unashamedly express themselves as human decision makers, explore all possibilities, choose and then step out in a venture of risk. To be a disciple is to be someone who is unafraid to be fully human in their divine calling to follow Jesus. Bonhoeffer modelled a way of doing discipleship that still left plenty of room for the disciple to be human, to be a decision maker, to take initiative. This is in contrast to a type of discipleship that nurtures Christians into an *unhealthy* dependency on Christ where we somehow believe it is his job description to do all for the 21st Century missionary. Christ will do much but not everything. Bonhoeffer's radical discipleship asks much of Jesus, but also makes demands of the missionary. The missionary is to come out into the tempest of living and "observe, judge, weigh, decide and act on their own."¹ Bonhoeffer's way of discipleship leaves room for much *human* initiative.

[God] doesn't want to relate to robots; he wants to interact with real persons. There can be no authentic personhood without some element of say-so, some degree of self-determination, some authentic power to influence things.¹

Bonhoeffer's word to any Christian activist today, is that of 'deputyship' which is defined as follows:

Deputyship, and therefore also responsibility, lies only in the complete surrender of one's own life to the other man. Only the selfless man lives responsibly, and this means that only the selfless man lives...Responsibility, as life and action in deputyship, is essentially a relation of man to man. Christ became man, and He thereby bore responsibility and deputyship for men. There is also a responsibility for things, conditions and values.¹

Where there are situations of moral chaos that create victims, it is necessary for some to rethink the possibilities of moral activism, take initiative and act on behalf of those who are too disempowered to act for themselves. It is incumbent on those with some power to use that power for the protection of those who have no power. Any new initiative, however, must have as its aim or hope a return to that moral order that can ensure the protection of all.

Bonhoeffer was not afraid to act, to take initiative, come what may. He admired those who embodied what he termed – *hilaritas*. This *hilaritas* Bonhoeffer explains is "confidence in [one's] own work, boldness and defiance of the world and of popular opinion, a steadfast certainty."¹ He numbered Luther, Lessing, Rubens, Hugo Wolf and Karl Barth among some who were marked by this *hilaritas*. There is no better way to conclude this section than by the ringing words of Bonhoeffer:

Being loved by God does not by any means deprive man of his mighty thoughts and his spirited deeds.¹

Such a moving quotation speaks of daring initiative. Far from belittling a person, having faith in God and being loved by God makes a person more fully human.

A spirituality of loss and gain

Bonhoeffer is well remembered for his bold statement: "When Christ calls man he bids him come and die."¹ This is the stuff of his Costly Discipleship. Elsewhere Bonhoeffer writes:

It [the cross] is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering that everyone has to experience is the call which summons us away from our attachments to the world. It is the death of the old self in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Those who enter in discipleship enter into Jesus' death. They turn their living into dying; such has been the case from the very beginning. The cross is not the terrible end of a pious, happy life. Instead, it stands at the beginning of community with Jesus Christ. Whenever Christ calls us, his call leads to death. Whether we, like the first disciples, must leave house and vocation to follow him, or whether, with Luther, we leave the monastery for a secular vocation, in both cases the same death awaits us, namely, death in Jesus Christ, the death of our old self caused by the call of Jesus.¹

His was not a spirituality of protection from pain but of walking towards pain and embracing it, whether that is our own pain or the pain of others. Much contemporary spirituality is taken up with the usefulness of God to us. Without wanting to dismiss this, we are reminded by Bonhoeffer through his words and life that God, even though for us, will not always provide and protect. Bonhoeffer's spirituality is more about our usefulness to God.

Bonhoeffer is echoing the Apostle Paul who framed his existence as a war time one. Paul talked of being in a fight and of waging war¹ and so not surprisingly, evil stalked him and he suffered as a missionary-soldier. Bad things happened to Paul, he endured troubles, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger.¹ In the heat of the battle Paul turned to his God for healing and protection, but he often bumped into a God who does not always heal or protect. In Lystra, for example, Paul was subjected to by a good stoning. A violent crowd turned on him and left him a bloody mess when they thought he was dead.¹ Again, where was the God who promised protection for his children? Another time Paul believed it was right for him to go to Spain but his attempts came to nothing. Satan, Paul argued, stopped him.¹ Where then was the triumphant Christ who had overcome the evil one? Paul also suffered a distressing physical complaint, but after praying for healing, came to the conclusion that this sickness was here to stay.¹

Bonhoeffer reminds us that if as missionary-soldiers we seek to overthrow evil wherever it is found and in its place establish the Kingdom of God, then suffering will be our constant companion. Jesus suffered and told us to expect suffering,¹ Paul and the early apostles suffered and challenged us to follow in their footsteps.¹ Going to difficult places of discipleship and seeking justice for all will put us in harm's way. Suffice it to say that we do not have a God in heaven who will always protect us from harm's way. Bonhoeffer lived what he wrote: out of fidelity to Christ and being a man for others Bonhoeffer placed himself in harm's way and was eventually hung by the Nazis. Of such a cost, he wrote:

From the beginning, it [the cross] lies there ready. They need only take it up. But so that no one presumes to seek out some cross or arbitrarily search for some suffering, Jesus says, they each have their own cross ready, assigned by God and measured to fit. They must all bear the suffering and rejection measured out to each of them. Everyone gets a different amount. God honors some with great suffering and grants them the grace of martyrdom, while others are not tempted beyond their strength. But in every case, it is the one cross.¹

What then of gain? At the end of his costly road and just prior to his walk to the gallows, Bonhoeffer declared: this is the end, but for me the beginning. He had heaven in mind – the ultimate prize! Likewise, Paul was convinced of one thing: that in the war zone with all its hardships, danger, and demons;¹ nothing can ever separate us from God's love and the promise of heaven.

Today's missionaries, if they are to stay in the trenches, must have the kind of spirituality that is content with God's love and heaven. Protection, deliverance, healing and provision will be ours at times, but what God does sometimes God does not do all the time..... Increasingly we are seeing a new generation of mission workers who want so much more from God. And thus, when disappointments inevitably come their way and they do not receive what they expected, they fall away. Bonhoeffer, however, stayed the course, right to the end.

A Spirituality for Women on Mission: The sisters of Mercy in Pakistan and East Timor?

Introduction

In my Masters of Theology studies I undertook a study of two recent ministries of the Sisters of Mercy – in Pakistan and with the people of East Timor. As a lay woman with a long involvement in Mercy education, I was interested in why the Sisters, who did not belong to a missionary Order in the traditional sense of the term, moved into these two endeavours which could be viewed as “missionary”. Of course, as a teacher in a Mercy secondary school, I knew of the history of the Sisters of Mercy. They journeyed from their native Ireland to England, then to North America and to Australia in the early days of the Order’s history, but that was largely to serve the needs of the Irish settlers rather than to make converts. ¹

The move by the Australian Sisters in the 1980s to Pakistan and to work with the people of East Timor in the 1990s was indicative of a continuation of the vision of their nineteenth century founder, Catherine McAuley¹, who worked with the most vulnerable people, particularly women and children, in her native Ireland.

Active and public ministry in response to the needs of the poor has defined the Sisters of Mercy since their inception. They were never an enclosed Order, but worked among the people and became known as the “Walking Sisters” because of their active presence in the community. Since their establishment in Australia in 1846, the Sisters of Mercy have been involved in the fields of education, health care and welfare. The ministry of the Australian Mercy Sisters first reached beyond Australia in the mid-1950s, with a mission to the then Australian territory of New Guinea. In the 1980s, the Sisters moved into new ministries as the laity took greater responsibilities in their schools and hospitals. Catherine McAuley’s tradition of service to the poor was expressed in new ways, including the establishment of Mercy foundations in Pakistan, and a growing connection with the people of East Timor.

The Australian Sisters of Mercy have worked in Pakistan since 1985. The first foundation in Gujrat was an initiative of the Melbourne Congregation, but subsequent foundations in Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Karachi have included Sisters from various Australian Mercy Congregations. Their ministry has been mainly in the fields of education, (primary, secondary and teacher training), health and welfare/pastoral care.

The Mercy Sisters’ work in East Timor was more organic in its development. In 1988, the Ballarat Sisters became involved in supporting a young woman whom the Jesuits had brought to study in Australia. From that initial personal connection, interest in East Timor was sparked among some Ballarat Sisters who became more and more committed to helping the people of East Timor. That commitment has taken the form of welcoming, accommodating and supporting East Timorese students in secondary and tertiary studies, as well as advocacy and awareness-raising in the Australian community. The Sisters have also visited East Timor, and following the 1999 East Timorese referendum on independence, Sisters of Mercy from Ballarat and from other Mercy Congregations have worked in East Timor in education and health services.

In this article I will examine some understandings of “mercy” found in Scripture and something of Catherine McAuley’s perspective on the term in order to gain a sense of the spirituality that underpinned the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, including their work with the people of Pakistan and East Timor. Like all in the mission of the Church, the Sisters needed a spiritual foundation that would nourish and sustain their ministry. Whilst the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, and individual or communal prayer have played a vital role in the spiritual life of the Sisters, I wish to focus in this paper on two other sources of their spirituality. The Second Vatican Council urged religious Congregations to return to their sources - to Scripture and to the vision and charism of their founders - in order to renew themselves and define their identity. I will now turn to these two sources to gain a sense of the spirituality of “Mercy” which shapes the women who name themselves as Sisters of Mercy, and nourishes and sustains their ministry.

Mercy In Scripture¹

In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, there are several key understandings of “mercy”. The first group of terms, from the Hebrew Scriptures, include *hesed*, a noun which means “steadfast love or kindness” and the adjective *hasîd*, meaning “gracious, constant, merciful or kind.”¹ These terms are indicative of God’s attitude of loyalty and fidelity, and are associated with “behaviour proper to the Covenant”¹, such as being in right relationship within another person, the family, the tribe, or community. *Hesed* implies a mutuality and permanence, and is “rooted in the graciousness of God.”¹ It appears in many books of the Hebrew Scriptures, featuring heavily in the Psalms, and in the books of the Prophets, where the people of God are called back to the Covenant. *Hesed* is integral to the Exodus story: “In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.”¹ It calls the people of God to re-enact the goodness of the God who chose them and saved them. For Catherine McAuley, her gratitude to a merciful God found its natural expression in caring for the vulnerable of her times.

The second sense of mercy found in Scripture involves being deeply affected by the needs of another. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the terms *rahamîm* (noun), meaning mercy and compassion, and its associated verb *raham* and adjective *rahûm*, stem from the Hebrew word for womb *rhm*. Through these words, the Hebrew Scriptures convey strong feminine imagery for God. This group of words indicates profound emotion, coming from deep within a person, a sort of “womb love” or gut feeling, which moves one to pity and compassion for another, and which is expressed in action to alleviate suffering.¹ *Rahamîm* and its associated terms indicate a creative, generous, nourishing and natural relationship between God and humankind.

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people, and will have compassion (*raham*) on his suffering ones...Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion (*raham*) for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.¹

For women involved in the mission of the Church, this term associated with mercy is compelling and generative.

In the Christian Scriptures, there is a somewhat similar term related to mercy. The plural Greek noun *splagchna* literally means entrails, bowels or guts, but has the symbolic sense of a depth of feeling, or of being moved to compassion from deep within a person. The related verb *splagchnizomai* means to have compassion or pity in the depths of one’s being.¹ It is interesting to note that it is this verb which is used to demonstrate how Jesus was moved to compassionate action for those in need, such as towards the crowds which had followed him (Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:32), the leper in Mark 1:41, and the widow of Nain in Luke 7:13. The term indicates how one should act towards one’s neighbour in the face of need, and it is this term which is used to describe the response of the Good Samaritan in Luke’s parable (Luke 10:33). There is a sense here of mercy being action that fulfils but also extends beyond the Law, for it is someone outside of the Jewish tradition who is seen as best exemplifying that which brings eternal life. Powerfully, it is this term which is used to indicate the response of the loving Father towards his sinful son in the parable best known as the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:20). In this way merciful, compassionate action is seen as being proper to God; it is God’s way of being moved to respond to his children. As the Australian educator Jackman notes, mercy in the life of Jesus is transformative. It is usually expressed on behalf of the powerless, and is unconditionally offered. Mercy is vulnerable and risks failure. It is initiated by the divine and expressed physically in the human. Thus it is strikingly incarnational.¹

The third but less frequently encountered group of Hebrew terms includes *hemlah*, which indicates pity, mercy or compassion, and *hamal*, meaning to have pity or compassion or in some instances, to spare someone from harm.¹ In the second chapter of Exodus, Pharaoh’s daughter opened the basket and saw the child contained within it. “He was crying and she took pity (*hamal*) on him.”¹ In the Christian Scriptures, *eleos* (Greek noun), meaning mercy, pity or compassion, and its related verb *eleeo* -to have mercy, pity or compassion, and the noun *eleemosune*, meaning almsgiving, works of mercy or charity. This concept is often used in relation to or by those who were despised or outcast, such as those seeking out Jesus for healing. The blind men in Matthew’s Gospel shout out: “Lord, have mercy (*eleeo*) on us, Son of David,”¹ as do the ten lepers in Luke 17:12. In the face of criticism from the Pharisees, Jesus justifies his focus on sinners by saying: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy (*eleos*), and not sacrifice.’”¹ He is keen to show that mercy is more than a duty, and even more important than strict adherence to the Law, if that precludes the care of people.¹

Additionally in the Christian Scriptures, the Greek term *oiktirmos*, denoting pity, compassion, mercy, sympathy, its related verb, *oiktiro* and adjective *oiktirmon* are used occasionally, and most usually to refer to a characteristic of God. “Be merciful (*oiktirmon*), just as your Father is merciful (*oiktirmon*).”¹ For Sisters working with disadvantaged Christians in Pakistan or with traumatized people in East Timor, these instructive terms fitted well with their desire to respond to great need.

Lastly are the terms *hen*, meaning grace or favour, *hanan* – to be gracious, *hanûn* – benevolent and merciful, and *hanînah*, cited once only, to indicate grace or mercy.¹ In Psalm 111:4, the LORD is described as gracious (*hanûn*) and merciful (*rahûm*). In the Christian Scriptures, one finds the noun *charis* (grace, favour, credit or joy), the verbs *charizomai* (to give, forgive, show favour or set free) and *charitoo* (to bless, show grace, with God as its subject), and the verbal noun *charisma* (evidence of favour, benefit or gift). *Charis* is frequently used for the Hebrew word *hesed* in Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible and is sometimes linked with *eleos* in the Christian Scriptures.¹ This word group appears mostly in Luke’s Gospel, when Mary or Jesus are described as “favoured by God”,¹ and in teachings and parables of Jesus regarding cancelling debts, forgiveness and generosity of spirit.¹ It is also used frequently in Paul’s writings as a greeting: “Grace (*charis*) to you and peace...”¹ Paul draws on this terminology repeatedly to express his understanding of salvation and the generosity of God through Christ: “..they are now justified by his grace (*charis*) as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”¹ In his writings about the spiritual gifts, he uses the term *charisma*.¹ He calls on the early Christians to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving (*charizomai*) one another, as God in Christ has forgiven (*charizomai*) you.”¹ Catherine McAuley’s urging to her Sisters to treat each other with charity and to remain unified¹ find resonance here.

In the Christian writings, God’s mercy is portrayed as incarnated in Christ, and being called forth from the believers to grace their relationships as a fitting response to God’s generosity. Mercy is a natural but challenging characteristic of a life lived in faithfulness to Jesus. In all Scriptural senses, mercy is dynamic, active, experiential and responsive, and for a Congregation bearing the name “Mercy”, Scripture calls the Sisters to embody that way of relating and being in the mission of the Church.

Catherine McAuley’s Understanding of Mercy

Since Vatican II, religious Congregations including the Sisters of Mercy have been encouraged to return to the vision of their founders for renewal of their charism and direction for their ministry. In the case of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley emphasised mercy, seeing it as essential to a follower of Jesus. In her first Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy, she wrote:

Mercy... has in all ages of the Church excited the faithful in a particular manner to instruct and comfort the sick and the dying poor, as in them they regarded the person of our Divine master, who has said, ‘Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me.’¹

Catherine identified mercy as an essential characteristic of Jesus’ mission and a requirement of his followers. The traditional Catholic teaching which designated certain actions as the “corporal” and the “spiritual” works of mercy loomed large for her. Many of the ministries of the early Sisters closely resembled these works of Mercy.

At the bedrock of Catherine McAuley’s faith was her sense of reliance on and gratitude to a merciful God. Catherine had a deep belief in belonging to God who was central to her being. She instructed her sisters to be “as the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its centre. Our centre is God, from whom all our actions should spring as from their source.”¹ In the tiring and difficult times, her trust in God’s providence anchored, sustained and compelled her. She wrote to Mary de Sales White in December 1840:

We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centred in God – for whom alone we go forward – or stay back. Oh may He look on us with love and pity, and then we shall be able to do anything He wishes us to do...¹

Sister M. Joanna Regan has identified Catherine's gratitude to God as her hallmark, which then led her to respond to others with endless hospitality.¹ In typical nineteenth century Catholic spirituality, Catherine saw God's love as sustaining and trustworthy above all else, but prayed nonetheless for God's grace and blessing. She encouraged her Sisters to have "great confidence in God" whose "infinite mercy" they experienced daily as they discharged their spiritual and corporal works of mercy "the business of our lives."¹ This duality of perspective was evident also when she explained to Sister M. Frances Warde that "while we place all our confidence in God – we must act as if all depended on our exertion."¹ This faith, pragmatism, and energy are hallmarks of her Sisters today.

In her prayer "The *Suscipe*" Catherine expressed her longing for complete surrender to her merciful God.

My God, I am Thine for all eternity; teach me to cast my whole self into the arms of Thy Providence with the most lively unlimited confidence in Thy compassionate, tender pity.¹

The *Suscipe* still speaks volumes to the modern-day Sisters, and it is clear that they prayed it in Pakistan in response to the challenges of their ministry. ¹ Their need for God to take away, in the words of the *Suscipe*, "all painful anxiety" and their trust in God's providence were vital to their continuation of Catherine's vision in that place and time. At difficult times in their ministry in Pakistan, for example, the Sisters' reliance on God's providence became starkly evident.¹

Catherine's sense of the Providence of God, a merciful God who could be trusted, was linked with an equal awareness of the reality of the Cross. Mercy, as practised by Christ, came at a price, but was not to be denied. One responded to God's grace by following the example of Christ, including accepting suffering and rejection. Catherine wrote to Sister M. Elizabeth Moore in April 1841 that

we may endeavour to prove our love and gratitude, by bearing some resemblance to Him – copying some of the lessons He has given us during His mortal life, particularly those of His passion.¹

Catherine had a strong sense of salvation won through Christ's suffering and death, and an identification with Christ in the suffering one experienced in life. When a difficulty arose or a sadness was encountered, she regarded that experience as a "portion of the cross",¹ or as evidence of being on the "secure high road of the cross."¹ For Catherine, the cross was the definitive merciful exemplar and a deeply meaningful motif in her faith life and in that of her Congregation. For the Mercy Sisters today, a distinctive cross is the symbol of their identity. In the case of their endeavours in Pakistan and East Timor, the cross was also a lived reality, as the Sisters faced illness, death, violence, vulnerability, and isolation. The modelling on Christ's example involved doing the works of mercy that were consistent with Christ's mission.

Catherine McAuley believed compassionate acts of service to one's neighbour were also acts of service to Christ. In her Congregation, the active and contemplative approaches to faith were entwined. She saw that the corporal and spiritual works of mercy

which draw religious from a life of contemplation, so far from separating them from the love of God, unite them much more closely to him, and render them more valuable in His holy service.¹

She held it was in serving the suffering poor that one served God. "What a consolation to serve Jesus Christ Himself in the person of the poor, and to walk the very same path He trod!"¹ In serving Christ by serving the poor, Catherine believed one also gave a good example which could have a powerful and edifying affect on others.¹ She instructed her Sisters to "Draw souls to God by your words, by your actions, by the works of the Institute," and reminded them that "the proof of love is deed".¹ This charism of active ministry is typical of the Sisters of Mercy today.

From a poem attributed to Catherine McAuley¹, one gains her understanding of the power of "sweet mercy" to relieve, moderate, and forgive. It is slow to anger, compassionate to all, and opens "in each heart a little heaven."¹ In modern parlance, mercy foreshadows the reign of God. Catherine's concept of mercy is active in its response to suffering, generous, tender, trusting, is ready to risk, to witness and to suffer. It is practical and compassionate. It is rooted in a steadfast God, and the way

of Jesus. Mercy is indeed outward-looking, responsive, active and transformative. With the eyes of mercy, one sees a situation of suffering and is moved to act to comfort those affected and to improve the situation.

Conclusion

Catherine McAuley put her trust in God alone, who was steadfast and kind, and incarnated in Jesus. His example of compassion to the needy and outcast with whom he identified, and his death on the cross compelled Catherine to leave her comfortable life and devote her resources and energy to “the poor, sick and ignorant”, the vulnerable of her time, the women and children. Out of gratitude to a merciful God, she moved into ministry and to founding a Congregation that was distinguished by its active presence in the community. In recent decades, her Australian Sisters have continued this feminine, practical, relational ministry, with a particular focus on women and children, on education, health and pastoral care, in new fields such as Pakistan and East Timor. Reflecting on the term “Mercy” in Scripture and what Catherine McAuley believed about mercy has provided the Australian Sisters with inspiration and spiritual sustenance for their ministry with the people of Pakistan and East Timor.

The Sisters of Mercy are pragmatic women who see themselves as doing mission-related work because they are religious women who wish to relate to, accompany and help people in need. The 2005 Direction Statement of the Melbourne Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy echoed this understanding:

We are women of mercy, passionate and practical, vulnerable with the vulnerable. Women in relationship- aware of the interdependence with all creation; women of diverse gifts, influenced by local and global concerns, moved to action by the Gospel imperative: ‘Go out...Welcome in.’¹

The ministries of the Sisters of Mercy in Pakistan and East Timor have been similarly practical, responsive to needs, relational and mutual. Reflection on the Scriptural understandings of “mercy” and the charism and practice of their founder, Catherine McAuley, have helped form a spirituality that has sustained the Sisters in the field and has contributed to the continuing “Circle of Mercy”, to use the title of the song which could be considered the Sisters’ international anthem. ¹ Its lyrics point to a powerful connection with the lives of those in need, a connection which I found to be abundantly evident in their ministries with the people of Pakistan and East Timor.

PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC SPIRITUALITY and MISSION in AUSTRALIA

Contemporary Pentecostal Spirituality and the implications for mission within Australia: a comparative study based on developments within the Assemblies of God in Australia/ Australian Christian Churches

'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty' (Zec 4:6b).

Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us (1 Cor 12:4-6 NLT).

It seems apparent that change is taking place in Pentecostal spirituality. Recently a research project was conducted to understand what is occurring within the Assemblies of God in Australia, also known as Australian Christian Churches (AoG/ACC), what was influencing this development and what its ensuing effects might be. It sought to identify what is currently emerging specifically in the pastors' beliefs and practices and its implication for mission. It sought to provide insights to help pastors retain their radical edge, being faithful to the movement's historic Pentecostal roots in the early 20th century and yet still develop a mature and relevant spirituality for this day.

Australian Christian Churches is a movement of self-governing Pentecostal Churches in voluntary cooperation to work together for mutual support and the spread of the gospel in Australia and the world. The Assemblies of God in Australia was formed in 1937 and has experienced consistent growth, particularly in the last twenty years. It adopted a new name of Australian Christian Churches in 2007. It currently numbers more than 1,100 churches with over 210,000 constituents, making it the largest Pentecostal movement in Australia.¹

Information was obtained was by way of data from a national Survey of practicing senior pastors throughout Australia. Results are shown in the table below. Although spirituality can be empirically seen and measured by a range of indicators, no attempt was made to measure people's individual spirituality. A Likert-type scale was used to gauge pastors' current attitudes and the general direction they are moving. The Survey's questions, accessible on a website, were designed so that participants could post their responses online to questions with complete anonymity. More data was also obtained from an analysis of the literature, by personal observation, from interviews, response questionnaires, and face-to-face or telephone interviews with key ministers in National and State leadership positions.

Pentecostal Spirituality

Christian spirituality implies more than simply the universal human religious experience or quest for meaning. It is about the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the attraction to things of the Spirit rather than earthly things and it is the conscious living of a Christian way of life. Although it mainly relates to the interior dimension of a person's life it cannot be separated from its outworking in the external visible world. Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality's features are not in themselves unusual. Many of them apply to other Christian traditions and have appeared before throughout history. Pentecostal spirituality does, however, bring a unique emphasis on the initiative and work of the Spirit in the believer.

The essential features of Pentecostal spirituality distilled from a diverse global movement emphasise the importance of *experience* of the Spirit. Pentecostal spirituality is not merely about forms and formal procedures but actually living a Christian way of life. Although this actual 'lived spirituality' of Pentecostals is much broader, classical Pentecostals usually define themselves in terms of the doctrine of speaking in tongues as the 'initial evidence' of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This classical view still forms part of the official doctrinal position of many Pentecostal denominations including the AoG/ACC. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is seen as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion and followed by tongues-speaking as the initial evidence.

Early Australian Pentecostalism

The Pentecostal movement in Australia began less than a decade after the earliest reported incidents of the phenomenon in the United States of America, before any institutionalisation and earlier than the formation of the larger denominations. From its beginning Australian Pentecostalism differed from its overseas counterparts, in that it was primarily a middle class movement, not one of the disenfranchised. Its origins were among people of relatively comfortable economic status. 'Deprivation theories' have proven inadequate to explain Pentecostalism's origins in Australia and its distinctive doctrine and practice of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹ Its beginnings were more rural than urban in comparison to the United States or Great Britain and the first Pentecostal church was pioneered and pastored by a woman, Sarah Jane Lancaster. Over half of the congregations by 1930 were established and led by women. It was both a cosmopolitan and an indigenous movement. Although it benefited from overseas influences, the leadership and major work was carried out by Australians. Once the movement was underway, visitors from America, England and other nations helped to 'shape the movement but not to make it'.¹

Information provided by key ministers for this Research Project confirms the historical literature's accounts, that *experience* was emphasised in early Pentecostal spirituality in Australia. A belief in 'experience over theology' and a radical encounter with the baptism of the Holy Spirit was clearly accentuated in the early years. Speaking in tongues as 'the evidence,' was regarded as an emphatic teaching and 'holiness was a significant distinctive'. Tongues speaking would be seen, heard and known in an authentic Pentecostal church. It was a 'Pentecostal distinctive'.

A Mixed Picture

This Research Project sought to discover whether pastors are confining themselves to the classical doctrinal position or are they are more concerned with the *experience* of the working of the Holy Spirit and the *exercise* of spiritual gifts? Is there more or less emphasis on the classical Pentecostal experiences, attitudes, beliefs and practices by pastors? Are more or less mainline (non-Pentecostal) forms of private devotional practices and 'Charismatic' and 'Third Wave' beliefs and approaches being adopted by pastors? Are pastors indicating an increase or decrease in Pentecostal practices in church services? What is occurring in relation to pastors' involvement in community service and outreach? What is their actual current position on speaking in tongues and the 'initial evidence' doctrine?

The data shows that while experiences of the Spirit of God are still important to the pastors today, there has been a development in their beliefs and practices with a mixed picture emerging. Low frequencies of classical Pentecostal practices indicate there is a lessening in spontaneous, oral, narrative and participatory 'liturgies' in church services. While this may be expected with an increasingly literary society, there also appears to be a change of emphasis from more 'individualistic' classical spiritual expressions such as messages in tongues and prophecy in church services, towards more corporate spiritual expressions, such as combined singing in the Spirit and community praise and worship.

Emphasis on altar calls for healing and baptism in the Spirit appear to be as strong as ever, but there is a decline in the exercise of spiritual gifts such as messages in tongues, prophecy and visions and dreams. It may also be the case, that increases in congregational size are making the orderly exercise of these individually operated gifts problematic. Despite this, pastors are still emphasising the importance of affective action within an organisation that has come out of humble beginnings to one that is institutionally modern and is more and more reaching the middle class.

Changes in Pentecostal Spirituality

When the data obtained from the key ministers is integrated with the Survey Results it confirms that there are changes and developments in classical Pentecostal beliefs, in demonstrable Pentecostal practices in church services and also in the pastors' own beliefs about the importance of these expressions.

A majority of the key ministers thought that Pentecostal spirituality in the movement is changing with some detrimental results: rather than holding to the classical Pentecostal view on tongues, pastors are adopting a more 'Third Wave' position (those who hold to the validity of the gifts of the Spirit but

do not require a climactic second blessing experience, evidenced by speaking in tongues) or a more 'Charismatic' position (the term now used recently for those who hold to the validity and use of the gifts of the Spirit but do not mandate the requirement of speaking in tongues to validate their experience of the Spirit).

Senior ministers in both the 60-70 years and the 70-80 age categories generally expressed the view that there had been a drift from early Pentecostal heritage with its classical doctrinal beliefs and practices. Some believed this was from the influence of the Charismatic renewal and that clearly some pastors have not had a radical crisis-type experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They believe there is less emphasis on the baptism of the Spirit than in the early years. Although speaking in tongues is still highly valued for personal edification among pastors, it is not regarded with the same emphatic view it used to have for being the 'evidence' for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These ministers thought the Survey Results showed a broadening of attitudes and practices and a declining emphasis on 'tongues and interpretation' in public church services. They also thought that 'holiness was a significant distinctive of early Pentecostalism' in contrast to beliefs and practices today.

A smaller number of the key ministers believe that Pentecostal spirituality 'is changing (but) without any visible negative results'. However, they still believe pastors need to embrace fresh supernatural experiences of the Spirit if the movement is to continue in its present positive rate of growth. They admitted there was a broadening of attitudes and practices showing a decline in emphasis on 'tongues and interpretation' in church services. Some key ministers believed that the changes merely reflected stylistic developments in church meetings but that the fundamental practices were virtually the same. The following various views were expressed: there was minor change due to 'seeker-sensitive approaches' but there was no change to essential doctrine; there was a 'more balanced' spirituality today than in the past but it was important that it not 'swing too much the other way'; rather than doing away with Pentecostal experiences, fresh and contemporary expressions were needed; Pentecostal spirituality was 'healthier' today 'with a more natural use of the gifts in the market place of everyday life' and not just as a part of the Sunday worship service.

Institutionalisation and Mission

It is clear that there is movement away from classical Pentecostal beliefs and attitudes and that increasingly 'Charismatic' and 'Third Wave' beliefs and approaches are being adopted. Classical Pentecostals claim that the normative pattern of Spirit baptism is as a distinct and separate experience that follows salvation with speaking in tongues as the 'initial evidence'. It now appears that most pastors are content in practice, if not in a formal statement of belief, for church members to acknowledge the gifts of the Spirit including tongues, without pressing the need for a crisis-type baptism of the Spirit after conversion.

Pastors appear to be frequently using mainline (non-Pentecostal) forms in their own private devotional practices. There is a decrease in classical Pentecostal practices in church services but a growing involvement in community services and outreach. Taking all the data into account, there seems to be a convergence of evidence indicating that Pentecostal spirituality is changing. It could be argued that this is the result of institutionalisation and revitalisation occurring in the movement.

The development of 'charismatic' leadership into more institutional types, where spontaneity and freedom gives way to order and organisational structure, is sociologically inevitable for group survival. It appears clear that the influence of the Charismatic renewal and 'Third Wave' movements have been instrumental in revitalising the AoG/ACC movement institutionally as a classical Pentecostal denomination. It is unlikely that this process of renewal, institutionalisation and further change will slow down. Problems arise however, when negative value judgments are put on this type of development, claiming that a pristine Christianity only existed for a brief period, perhaps one generation - that of Jesus and Paul. This is a simplistic and overly dismal view of the history of the Christian church.

In my view the Spirit of God is involved *both* in the process of renewal that reverses the petrifying effects of institutionalisation, and also in creating new structures that preserve this very new life that has come in nascent form. Deliberate, positive and Spirit-inspired development of structures and forms in the *institutionalisation* of charisma, is very different from the fossilisation that occurs in the

routinisation of charisma. The New Testament itself gives evidence of such Spirit - directed developments in church organisation in order to preserve its stability, order and survival.

The AoG/ACC as a mission movement is reaching more and more people from the middle class resulting in the development of an organisational structure to oversee its growth. An essential aspect of its Pentecostal spirituality is its flexible, adaptive and innovative nature. The Spirit of God is creatively inspiring the development of new structures and forms to reach more people in Australia's specific social and cultural context. The development of Pentecostal spirituality into its current form shows the influence of this institutionalisation which is essentially facilitating the growth and preservation of the movement.

Pentecostalism with its flexibility in the Spirit, has an ability to make itself at home in almost any context. The AoG/ACC is exercising its freedom in the Spirit to develop culturally relevant 'contextualised' expressions in Australia. In sociological terms, the 'charisma' is 'institutionalising' for its own survival. In theological terms, the Spirit of God is creating new structures to nurture the growth of the new life.

It is admitted that problems and difficulties do emerge when structures fossilise and their intended original function and purpose is forgotten. Rather than serving the Spirit and charisma, the structure becomes an end in itself. The reality is that human structures also suffer from the effects of the Fall. Church history is full of examples of repeatedly alternating patterns of petrifying institutionalisation and revitalisation. Sometimes this occurs within structures, sometimes people have been forced out causing yet another institution to be born. 'Our world today is littered with dead structures that no one has had the courage to bury'.¹

The negative aspects of institutionalisation can only be overcome by continually going back to basics. Goals must be constantly reviewed and reached. It must be asked whether the best people are leading, as those most suitable to the task. We need to be alert to the perils in institutionalisation of mixed motives, unwieldy bureaucracy, the lowering of standards and the fossilisation of principles. We must be vigilant to those new people that God may wish to lead the movement into a continual process of renewal. Above all, we must continually point the movement towards the source of all life and vitality, the Spirit of God himself.

Healthy growing churches are those that are able to maintain a reciprocal relationship - a creative tension between the static pole of institutionalism and the dynamic pole of charisma; between the organism and organisation; between the freedom of the Spirit and human structures. The New Testament evidences a 'bipolarity' where the church is referred to in both static and dynamic images. Typical dynamic images describe the church as a 'body' (Rom 12:4-8). Static images are taken from the world of architecture and construction (1 Cor 3:10). Some scriptures actually combine the dynamic and static images together, such as 'living stones' (1 Pet 2:5; Eph 2:21; 4:12; 1 Cor 3:9).

The continuing success and ongoing viability of the AoG/ACC as a mission minded renewal movement will depend on whether it is able to maintain this creative tension between institutionalisation and the freedom of the Spirit. An innovative and flexible relationship needs to be preserved between the experience of the Spirit and the charismatic authority of local pastors on the one hand, and the denominational institutional structures with its bureaucratic authority on the other.

Prognosis for the Future

It appears the AoG/ACC leadership is attempting to correct past attitudes of inwardness and an excessively internal spirituality (a 'bless me club') that developed in some aspects of traditional classical Pentecostalism. The emphasis on contemporary cultural relevance reflects a desire for a more integrated and holistic spirituality than the traditional or classical early Pentecostal expressions. At times, the classical Pentecostal practices could be self-serving and inward, rather than reflecting a Spirit-empowered Christianity that has a focus on mission in reaching the unchurched.

Pastors have recognised that the work of the Spirit needs to extend beyond personal spirituality and private experiences towards more combined corporate and unified expressions. This is reflective of a desire to be obedient to the scriptural purposes in mission of reaching people outside the church. As a

growing movement, the AoG/ACC is developing a more professional and charismatically structured church organisation to achieve this.

However, there is also always a danger in the compromise that cultural accommodation brings. Contemporary approaches may lead to a dilution of certain key elements of Pentecostal spirituality. It would be of concern to many in the movement that the measurements of the frequency of Pentecostal experiences and practices (together with other data) indicate a tendency towards decline in some practices of Pentecostal spirituality in the pastors. This may have adverse implications for the future direction of Pentecostal phenomena in church services.

Sociologically speaking, institutional dilemmas such as the development of an accommodation to the culture, as well as mixed motivation, routinised symbolic forms, bureaucratic structures and rigid doctrinal forms, cannot be silenced without also extinguishing 'charisma' or adversely affecting the institution. These dilemmas help not only in institution-building but also in creating an environment that is receptive to charisma. A certain level of conflict or tension must be tolerated in the movement if the experience of the presence of the Spirit and the practice of the spiritual gifts is to continue its role. Conflict is lethal to a group only when it attacks a 'core value', but over peripheral issues may actually help in advancing social structures.

The AoG/ACC has its share of strong personalities with differing views over doctrine and ministry practice but the structure is flexible enough to allow diversity without fracturing its unity. Entry into the movement of those from the wider Charismatic movement and those pursuing contemporary, relevant and/or modern approaches to ministry has diluted its classical Pentecostal spirituality. However, they have also increased attendances and brought increased openness to the experience of the immanent presence of the Spirit. They have brought a healthy distrust of routine ritualism and over-reliance on the enshrined doctrinal statements and institutionalism of early Pentecostalism. Rather than being a threat, these tensions are signs of new life and strength.

One concern is that with so many pastors studying contemporary methods, skills, practices, models of leadership and church growth, there is an increasing emphasis on institutional factors for success. However, many of the successful ministers, speakers and authors, usually attribute their institutional growth and success to prayer, revelation and the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this message can be easily lost as others often seek to imitate the institutional programs which have come out of these successful ministers' own personal experiences of the Spirit of God. The paradox of power is a core value that requires a continued balance between programs and spiritual power - between natural efforts and supernatural assistance.

It appears that an element of ambiguity seems necessary for the survival of the freedom of the Spirit and the practice of the spiritual gifts. To silence these dilemmas of institutionalisation would be the end of the uniqueness of AoG/ACC (Pentecostal) spirituality:

...weeds as well as the wheat will grow within the institutional matrix ... Ambiguities and tensions are sure to accompany the presence of charisma, but leaders would do well to heed the admonition of Jesus, who when asked if the weeds should be pulled replied, "No, because while you are pulling the weeds you may root up the wheat with them. Let them both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:29-30).¹

The future for the movement holds the promise of greater institutional growth and development in mission along with attempts to also maintain the freedom of the Spirit. At the same time there is a growing alignment with other successful contemporary styled churches and movements. Many of these other churches and groups also embrace numerical growth but deny the validity of some aspects of Pentecostal spirituality in the experiences of the Spirit of God and practice of the spiritual gifts. This may have adverse implications for the direction of Pentecostal spirituality within the institutional setting of the AoG/ACC.

It is important that the tension between organism and organisation be continually monitored. A key solution most likely lies in the hands of Spirit-empowered local church pastors and their own practice of Pentecostal spirituality in both private and church settings.

A Missional Outward-looking Spirituality

There is a need for the continuing development of a contextualised and mature spirituality among pastors that improves the effectiveness of church life and mission. A major challenge is to allow the Holy Spirit freedom to move and for charisma to flourish. A re-emphasis on the more reflective forms and practices of spirituality and not only activist practices should be seriously considered.

Pastors must continually seek the release of a truly people-led movement empowered by the Spirit with authentic practice of the gifts of the Spirit through all the members. They need to give direction, teach and lead people in how to minister to each other by exercising the gifts of the Spirit. The local church pastor together with key leaders is to guide and correct the operation of the gifts in public church services, modeling and encouraging this in fresh, culturally relevant expressions. A specified time and space within the corporate service for 'body ministry' should be made. If the typical weekend church service is no longer the appropriate venue, then another needs to be made, whether mid-week meeting, prayer meeting, special training event or in small groups. Workshops and seminars on the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in a balanced, contemporary and pastorally guided approach need to be encouraged, otherwise the stimulus of the charisma may be marginalised or significantly diminished.

Pastors as leaders need to be open and honest about spiritual experiences and enthusiasm without glossing over inauthentic practices. Experiences of emotional expression should be genuine and reflective of Australian cultural forms rather than importing cultural expressions from 'old time Pentecostal services' or incongruous social and cultural contexts. A continued quest for psychological, intellectual and spiritual integration, without downplaying any of these aspects, must be valued and sought after.

A recovery of the spontaneous and oral aspect of classical Pentecostal spirituality without sacrificing intellectual rigour and reflection must be continually encouraged. Emphasising on-going experiences and encounters with the immanent presence of God at and after conversion in Spirit baptism, rather than a rigid doctrinaire approach to the identity of who Pentecostals are, needs to be encouraged.

There is a need for a recovery of the early eschatological and apocalyptic fervour without becoming overly 'otherworldly', producing a greater openness to interracial fellowship and leadership and female participation in ministry and leadership. A recovery of the value of being 'not of this world' within an increasingly affluent western cultural milieu will require leadership to provide great examples of sacrificial and generous giving to counter the influence of materialism and consumerism.

The continuation of a missional and outward-looking spirituality should be encouraged, focusing on reaching the non-churched with the gospel as well as social transformation and pastoral care to those in need. Social righteousness and justice must not be ignored in bringing people to personal salvation and righteousness. In the past, Pentecostals have been accused of a spirituality that has little concern for social transformation and preaching a gospel that either spiritualises or individualises social problems; advocacy for the oppressed has generally not found a voice in its spirituality. Recent initiatives within the denomination to help the poor must be increasingly encouraged.

For Pentecostal spirituality to be identified with liberating social action, a discernment of the forces of deception will be needed. Being filled with the Spirit includes involvement in discernment of the truth to uncover the travesties that maintain injustice, oppression and lack of compassion towards the marginalised.

A reinforcement of biblical authority with a pneumatic approach to Scripture is needed but with a widening of the full counsel of the Word of God beyond the narrow foci of personal development and success, to issues of character, holiness and discipleship.

Protection of the autonomy of local churches should be maintained while accepting the benefits of leadership in the denomination's executive positions. However, the organisational advantages of leadership-driven models of Church structure must not be allowed to sideline ordinary lay people's maximum participation in prayer, witness, testimony and decision-making.

A reworking of the theological boundaries of Spirit baptism will assist pastors and churches not to neglect a powerful spiritual metaphor for both Christian initiation and charismatic empowerment for

mission. A well worked theological Trinitarian perspective both of ecclesiology and of Spirit baptism as a divine act in both inaugurating the kingdom and eschatological participation in the kingdom is required.

Conclusion

Current pastors' spirituality is still 'Pentecostal', but it has become delivered and styled in increasingly 'contemporary clothes'. It is still oriented on *experience* with the Holy Spirit but is reflecting a more educated and affluent western cultural context. It demonstrates the importance of holding firm to principles and revealed truths, not forms and traditions. It points to the conclusion that leaders must constantly go back to the painful self-critical task of bringing the structures and programs of the movement into line with its stated aims of renewal and mission.

Not all institutional developments are the result of the forces of routinisation and spiritual decline. Although social scientists generally claim when any religious movement moves out of the 'charismatic' phase and becomes institutionalised, its growth rate slows significantly, this study shows that this is not inevitably so. Instead of being overcome by modernity and secularisation, the signs are that the AoG/ACC's growth is continuing and that it is adapting to social change. Renewal and change is possible within a denomination itself. The AoG/ACC's distinctive form of Pentecostal spirituality is based on a desire to reform and renew the church. This Research Project has explored how the AoG/ACC movement's pastors are currently expressing this emergent spirituality in relating to the specific western cultural context in Australia.

ENDNOTES

MISSION AND SPIRITUALITY AT SOLACE EMERGING MISSIONAL CHURCH: AN INTERACTIVE NETWORK FOR EVERYDAY FAITH

Darren Cronshaw

Synopsis

'Solace EMC' is an emerging church grappling with expressing their mission and spirituality in contemporary society. Started by Olivia Maclean as an additional congregation of a large Anglican church, they have since branched off on their own with ongoing Anglican and also Baptist relationships. Their founding ethos was to create space for theological questioning and develop interactive worship for all ages and all stages of faith. They have a focus on celebrating everyday spirituality, and the vocation and mission of all members of their network. As such they see themselves as an interactive network more than a Sunday-centered group. Their own book *Remaking* and the seven ways of Jesus-centered spirituality are key tools they have developed for nurturing people for their mission in everyday life. They help people reflect on their passions and dreams, and celebrate people being better neighbours, friends, advocates, businesspeople, teachers, nurses and environmental stewards. They express their reason for existence in their mission statement: 'To Enable a People to Thrive as Followers of Jesus, Celebrating and Re-making their Everyday World'.

The 'Shaping of Things Now' research

Emerging churches are exploring new ways of being church which engage missionally with their communities and that exercise innovation in their expression. Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost in their influential book, *The Shaping of Things to Come* argue for the need of multiplying new missional structures, offer a theological paradigm for emerging churches and share innovative church stories from around the world.¹ They argue for 'messianic spirituality', by which they mean a non-dualistic approach to faith that does not limit faith to the 'sacred' sphere and avoids warning against too much 'secular' entanglement. They draw on Hebraic thought and reflect on the implications of Jewish monotheism – that God is the one God over all of life and not just 'religious zones'.² They founded Forge Mission Training Network³ to help birth and nurture the emerging missional church (EMC) movement in Australia. Forge has played a key networking and training role in helping many, but not all, of the new emerging churches get started. One of the churches they have influenced is Solace EMC, an interactive network for everyday faith in Melbourne's north-eastern and eastern suburbs.

There is a great deal to learn from observing what is actually happening in emerging churches like Solace. The emerging church literature contends that new models are the way to reach people in a 'postmodern' society, but do the results match the rhetoric? Instead of looking at the theory and ideals, I am interested in examining the present and local perspective of what is happening in particular congregations. What innovation is happening and where is it taking churches in their mission and spirituality? What can we learn from the new and creative ways of emerging churches? How is 'the shaping of things' now? I participated at Solace for a month in September 2006, interviewed key leaders and conducted five focus groups with participants. What follows is an initial report of Solace's story and the key cultural features I observed and from which I am learning. This is part of my larger research project into emerging churches in Melbourne and how they are expressing mission and innovation.⁴

A 'Solace liturgy'

Solace was planted in January 2000 as an 'alternative worship' congregation out of one of Melbourne's largest Anglican churches, St Hilary's Kew (SHACK). Olivia Mofatt (now Maclean) was on staff at St Hilary's and discerned a need for different approaches to worship and theological reflection for young adults. Describing themselves as a church for 'the unchurched and the over-churched', they were influenced by alternative worship forms and postmodern leadership ideas. Solace now meets on Sunday mornings at St Paul's in Station Street, Fairfield. In the midst of a busy shopping precinct, between a restaurant and a bread shop, the ninety year-old church building, built in 1916, presents as a traditional Anglican church. Yet Solace and St Paul's are dreaming about how to make best missional use of their space.

On 10 September 2006, I participated in the 'Solace liturgy' that invites several people to lead parts of the service. People mingle or sit around St Paul's on lounges, chairs and steps. Stuart Davey,⁵ one of the pastors, greets us and explains we may go to different parts of the room. We can prayerfully read the papers on the wall – which that Sunday included articles about the deaths of Steve Erwin and Peter Brock. There is an option of contributing to one of many offering boxes – with symbols of our money, time, environmental care or encouragement of others. Or we can respond by writing, painting or moulding play-dough, pour a fair-trade plunger coffee or engage in quiet conversations.

After this choose-your-own adventure 'liquid church'⁶ experience, Stuart calls everyone together and asks, 'Where have you seen God at work this week?' Con had visited a church in Queensland and appreciated the welcome he experienced. Stuart had weeded his garden and reflected on what God was taking out of his life. Integrating faith with everyday life is a feature of Solace and the theme for this morning's service. The worship continues with more questions interspersed with songs and a Michael Leunig poem.⁷ Annette presents teaching about 'Transforming Grace' and being enthralled by God rather than primarily seeking conformity, doctrine, church activities or special experiences.

Discussion follows about what holds people back from knowing God's love or learning from God or others: self-sufficiency, pride, an anti-music bias or a bias against traditional forms or experts. Toni says whenever she sees someone die, her reaction is to think how terrible God is. Miriam admits she naturally responds in fear to Arab men, but she wants instead to smile and be ready to express a warm greeting. One person says she responds to disappointment with God by avoiding prayer; another that she does the opposite and seeks to do more spiritual disciplines. Maybe a third of people who are present contribute to discussion, but most listen with interest. Well-constructed questions lead to thought-provoking discussion, and people do not criticise responses or seek to immediately resolve dilemmas. People are reasserting their commitment to traditional evangelical practices like prayer, Bible reading and compassion to the needy, but express wanting to do these things with right motives and not out of obligation. Stuart summarises, prays and invites contributions to tidying up.⁸

The origins and 'ways' of Solace

Despite their distinctively alternative approaches to worship, the real focus of Solace is not any church event or pastors, but on Solace participants living out the ways of Jesus. The most basic principle of Solace is that it exists 'to enable a people to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and re-making their everyday world'.⁹ They have developed seven Ways to be Jesus-centred and relevant to everyday life. They are based on 'Transforming Grace' inspired by Dallas Willard and an approach to historical spiritual traditions outlined by Richard Foster: the contemplative, holiness, charismatic, evangelical, social justice and sacramental traditions.¹⁰ Solace has added a seventh Way about relational wholeness:

- *The Way of the Everyday* is about acknowledging that God is both above all things and in all things.
- *The Way of Contemplation* is about living a life that does not lead to burnout.
- *The Way of Seeking the Spirit* is about joining with the Spirit in the work of God in the world.
- *The Way of Relating* is about relational wholeness.
- *The Way of Holiness* is about living a life that works.
- *The Way of Justice* is concerned with the welfare of people, the state of our society, and the environment.
- *The Way of Learning and Understanding* involves applying new knowledge to enable change and growth.¹¹

Olivia hopes that the Ways will be an entry point for people into Christian faith and the Solace community, linking spirituality and mission for people outside the church.¹²

A network-based approach to church

As a network forming around a Jesus-centred spirituality that is remaking the world, Solace is intentionally broadening their efforts beyond Sundays. The main gathering in terms of attendance is Sunday morning at St Paul's, which is the locus of their inner northern focus in Northcote/Fairfield.

Community members also meet in small groups, at the annual Festival weekend, on Tuesday nights over a meal, in a monthly Taize service, on the email network and informal contexts. They invite people to find the right balance of what to be involved in:

One person may be a part of a small group and go to Taize Fridays once a month, another may go to Tuesday Nights, another still may interact with the online community through the email group, and none of them necessarily meet or interact with the other two, although all [are] equally a part of Solace.¹³

Some Solace members are opting out of 'Sunday stuff' for the sake of being church in the world, and finding spiritual nourishment in other-than-Sunday expressions.

Distinctive features

I observed four features of Solace that were distinctive about their identity and what they celebrate: interaction, questioning, everyday spirituality and dreaming.

Feature #1: Interactive worship

Solace started with a group of people who felt traditional sermon and worship styles did not fit. They wanted worship and teaching that was interactive rather than merely 'a sing and a talk' and prayer book readings. Informed by adult learning principles and multi-sensory worship, they planned gatherings that were 'informal, participatory and authentic'. The symbols that represent Solace culture include candles, tables not pews, play dough, relative absence of music and painted mugs.¹⁴ Olivia says worship becomes like a game of Hacky Sack – anyone can start or contribute to the conversation, people learn by doing and the game is not successful until everyone participates.¹⁵

As well as teaching input with lectures, they have an open microphone and encouragement to ask and explore questions. As well as practising communion traditionally, at times they share meals together. Instead of meeting inside for worship every Sunday, once or twice per year they plant trees or clean up the billabong at Kew.¹⁶ There were questions about what people might say in the open microphone, whether lunch can replace Eucharist, or whether Greening Up Australia can replace a service. But participants say these interactive practices help them connect with God and one another in new ways.

Deborah recalled a highlight for her of interactive worship and allowing voices of pain to be heard was the post-September 11 service. She was rostered to preach on Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 21) but instead said: 'Well, let's ... everyone ... say what they want to say, read what they want to say, pray what they want to pray'. Deborah explained that a Solace principle is that you cannot disagree with people's contributions, which led to a painful but special time that morning. A Rwandan said: 'When all my people died, why didn't we hold a special service for that?' Someone else who has just been working in South Africa spoke of all the children who die everyday. Two Americans asked: 'Why had this happened to our country because America is God's hand in the world?' Deborah said they listened to one another's grief, not always agreeing but not answering and arguing either.¹⁷

Interactive worship was part of Solace's founding charism, but they soon developed a complementary interest in intergenerational worship. They sought to be family-friendly but not family-focused. The ideal of Solace is to embrace and include children, but the reality does not always match the rhetoric. Some parents still laugh when they remember services they turned up to with candles on the floor and hot drinks left beside chairs.¹⁸ Most Solace gatherings, though, make space for children, and a lot of Solace participants who are not parents take responsibility for nurturing and interacting with children.

Anna is the new integration worker at Solace, a role description that expresses Solace's desire to integrate children, families and all ages in worship. She organises the intergenerational services and 'Pancake Sunday' for young families, and runs a program for children on other Sundays. Anna herself grew up in church and says she matured as she left behind her desire to be told what to believe and subsequently explored questions of faith for herself. She appreciated reading *Mr God this is Anna*,¹⁹ an amazing story of God meeting the little girl Anna where she is at and realising that God is everywhere. When Solace asked her to consider working with children, she remembered the organic faith of Anna in the book and wanted to work with God to bring out what children know about God.²⁰

Solace has a healthy ministry to youth too. They used to meet as a small group during 'Sunday stuff' at Solace and discussed issues of faith and life, but they have started now to join the Solace gathering. All people – including youth – are encouraged to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth. Some young people go to other churches to enthusiastically sing and join in with a larger youth ministry but come to Solace to have space to think about their faith and participate in deep discussions.²¹ Barb Totterdell suggests that key values of the emerging church movement – allowing questions, engaging culture, celebrating stories, serving the community – are values that ministries to children and youth need.²²

Feature #2: Theological questioning

Solace has always attracted people who wanted to question assumptions about God and explore issues of doubt as well as faith. The St Hilary's 5 o'clock service of young adults that Olivia first worked with included a group who were dissatisfied with routine answers. They balked at the perception that the solution to any problem was to 'pray and read the Bible'.²³ Solace started with permission to ask any question and acceptance of people who were at any stage of faith or non-faith.²⁴ Leanne commented that she has never seen anyone shocked by someone else's question, and that honest sharing is encouraged because Solace is 'not the glossy brochure' that pretends everything is perfect.²⁵ Solace has intentionally wanted to deal with complex issues and different people's stages of faith. Jamieson would appreciate Solace as a 'leaver-sensitive' church that recognises the complexity of faith maturation and allows space for expressing questions and emotions.²⁶

Solace participants say that it is an important part of their culture that space is made for any stage of faith including no faith. Diane commented:

I don't know if our church does it perfectly, but one thing our church does well is to allow people to come in and explore God and spirituality without commitment or criticism, and to leave when they are ready or to stay and ask questions. No question is silly!²⁷

Traditional boundaries of who is 'in' and 'out' are less important for Solace. For some, this would simply be about love and inclusion. For others, it is based on an articulated approach to social set theory.²⁸ People whose partners are not believers particularly appreciate this approach. Their spouses can come and feel a sense of belonging, indeed choose their own level of belonging, and not be judged or preached at. Nigel explained that he is not a Christian because he has not had a convincing experience of God and God being real, but he is committed to Solace because Christianity is important to his wife Leanne. He often contributes practically, is a regular participant and is being asked to help with teaching on contemplation and meditation.²⁹ One woman said that it has been helpful for a young person wrestling with her inherited faith to be able to ask Nigel: 'So why you not a Christian?' and talk through issues of faith and non-belief.³⁰

Solace's theological questioning is part of a broader rethinking about the place of faith in contemporary society. Solace is committed to holding to the essence of the gospel but still be authentic to the experience of their culture. They describe it as an 'ancient-future' mix, 'holding the hand' of the traditional church and reinventing the way they engage with postmodern culture.³¹

Feature #3: Everyday spirituality and vocation

A third discernable feature of Solace is the celebration of everyday spirituality and vocation. Their guiding principle that 'Solace exists to enable a people to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and remaking their everyday world' has developed over time. Olivia said that the first year of Solace focused on developing an authentic Sunday gathering with many-to-many interactive worship, and the second year they started exploring what church and faith meant beyond Sundays, inspired by Foster and Willard.³² They held courses and collected resources, and in 2006 published *Remaking* as a collection of stories, artwork and exercises from twenty writers and ten artists, structured around the seven 'Ways of Jesus-centred spirituality'. The first of the seven Ways focus on this sacramental tradition of celebrating God in the ordinary events of everyday life and work; 'that there exists no

separate categories of spiritual and unspiritual, and that God can be found, and has an integral interest, in all that happens in the world'.³³

Theologically, an understanding of the mission of God and the incarnation is an inspiration for Solace as they live out 'being sent' as was Jesus. As well as articulating the context of our cultural era, the Solace constitution articulates some of this theological foundation:

Just as Jesus lived among a people of a particular time and culture so do we seek to live amongst people of our time and culture. Furthermore Jesus engaged in every aspect of life and taught that the work and reign of God encompasses the entire world, all things are or can be sacred and made new.³⁴

Stuart said they are influenced most significantly in this by James Thwaites who teaches that the church as the body of Christ is the work of God in the entire world and not just the institutional church.³⁵ They applaud the work of God inside church programs but also, and perhaps more importantly for mission, 'beyond the congregation'. *Remaking* explains their approach is based on Christ's body filling everything (Ephesians 1:23), and as the body, the church is called to remake the world, not to be focused on a building or list of programs, but people sent into their everyday world.³⁶

Solace celebrates the 'Way of the everyday' in people who seek to remake their world in their work and relational lives. Jude, a pastor from 2004 to 2006, celebrates a physics teacher who started an ethics class for students, a businessperson who cuts profits by 15% to check that overseas manufacturing is as ethical as possible, and a student who attends the Christian group at school even though it is not his peer group.³⁷ There is a research scientist who is part of Solace who devotes herself to malaria research, conscious it does not attract huge funding but is one of the largest killers of poor people. A young couple is investing in housing that gives preference to marginalised renters.³⁸ Then there are a couple of people who have a weeknight set apart for writing to politicians.³⁹ The naming and celebrating of these things reminds the community of their identity and how they are living out their purpose of remaking the world.⁴⁰

Friends of Abigail spoke of the example of her passions. She is passionate about Australian native plants and regenerating native areas, and has organised the involvement of Solace in Friends of Glass Creek, Greening Australia tree planting and Clean Up Australia.⁴¹ She is encouraged that 'restoring the world in God's intent' is seen as part of her mission. Furthermore, as a parent Abigail seeks to help her children, though not explicitly Christian, to orient their lives the way God would want them. She also expresses a strong sense of call to her work, teaching English as a second language. She appreciates that Solace validates that and says that part of the purpose of Solace is to support people and their work rather than expecting they have to go somewhere else if they want to be involved in mission. Whether through hobbies, relationships or work, she has a Solace-inspired or at least Solace-affirmed understanding that if you are bringing the life of the Kingdom of God, then that is valid mission whether or not you mention the name of Jesus.⁴²

The model of ministry of Solace leaders and the structure of Solace as a network are directed towards helping facilitate everyday spirituality. All staff are part-time, so they have a 'foot in the world'.⁴³ They give priority to encouraging people to find and live out their vocations, rather than operating church programs. Olivia said they have a saying: 'Jesus Christ bled for this earth, so go and bloody do something about it'.⁴⁴ They take time to intentionally ask questions like 'Where is God taking you?', 'What are you enjoying?', 'What are you passionate about?', 'What is it about this community you are living in that you connect with?' and 'What are you challenged about or celebrating with people around you?'.⁴⁵ Solace wants to help people dream about how to remake their everyday world.

Feature #4: Dreaming

Solace started with dreaming about new ways of being church and remaking the world, and have developed their capacity for dreaming with focused training and programs. In 2005, three Solace members, Ursula, Stuart and Olivia, did Catalyst-Innovations training, a program that helps Christians develop innovative business plans and integrate business with faith. Olivia said Catalyst gave her skills in emergence and entrepreneurship, and confidence to keep going and not close Solace in the midst of the difficulties.⁴⁶

Dreaming nights are a service sponsored by Solace EMC designed to help individuals and groups who are yearning to change the places where they live and work. They foster questions, encourage plans to be balanced with healthy spirituality and concerns for justice, and can assist with business plans, seed-funding or whatever else is needed to help make a dream become a reality.⁴⁷ They are broadly concerned with helping people realise their God-given dreams to remake the world for good – whether to start a business or pray for a neighbour.⁴⁸

One of the big dreams about neighbourhood that Solace are exploring is ‘SPACE’ or ‘SPACEmakers’, the group of eight St Paul’s and Solace people, and an employed project manager, who are looking at how best to develop and use the space at St Paul’s. The name SPACE suggests the partnership between St Paul’s (SP) and Solace (ACE), and the hope for creating more community-friendly space. They use their regular meetings as an opportunity to discern what is happening in their community. These are the topics for discernment used by SPACEmakers in their first hour of meeting together:

- Things to cheer
- Changes to be part of
- Crisis/conflict in which to be a peacemaker
- Celebrations to join in
- Crowds or coincidences to pay attention to
- Conversations that lead somewhere.

In their second hour of meeting they discuss the building and its redevelopment. They have had a number of architects offer proposals and quotes, and are in the process of selecting one and applying for a denominational grant to remake the space and open up the church more to the street.⁴⁹ They still want to avoid being building-centred, but hope that the building they do use will better communicate their openness to the community.

Conclusion – Bridging the gap

Solace does not need convincing about the importance of checking whether reality meets the rhetoric of emerging church thinking. In a congregational discussion, Annette suggested that Solace is prone to see their shortcomings and the gap between reality and practice.⁵⁰ Olivia admits that there is a big gap between their ideals and who they are.⁵¹ They say ‘mind the gap’, echoing the London Underground or more philosophically the theory of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance says that when attitudes and behaviours are inconsistent and showing dissonance, something must change, and usually the attitude changes to match the behaviour. The leadership agenda is to help people cross the gap in the other direction – to help match what people say they believe with what their lives show about what they really believe, and to help people move on from who they are to become who they are in Christ.⁵²

Solace has distinctive theological reflections and approaches to church, particularly in the areas of spiritual formation and everyday theology. They have had some struggles in delineating their approaches to mission and innovation, which will be explored further in other writing, but they are in the process of articulating their ideals of remaking the world and encouraging one another along the way(s). One of Solace’s *quintain* poems articulates some of their hope:

Church
People gathered
Expressing God’s grace
Finding hope in disappointment
Community.⁵³

END NOTES

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 5. I refer to church participants simply with a first name pseudonym, except when quoting published documents or pastors. For pastors I use the full name for the first reference and thereafter first name only. First names may suggest a level of familiarity normally inappropriate for academic reporting. However, first names distinguish case study participants from literature sources, and participant-observation did bring a 'first name' level of familiarity between the researcher and participants.
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“Their Sphere is Among the Wattles”:

Doug and Maysie Pinch and the Nazarene Mission to the Bandjalang

Introduction

The little chapel at Box Ridge, Coraki, was constructed of nine-foot galvanised iron sheets. The hot northern sun beat down upon its unlined walls in the summer. In the winter, these same walls provided no protection from the bitterly cold nights. Kerosene lanterns lit the place at night and a kerosene pressure lamp hung over the pulpit to give the preacher light. The mosquitoes bit voraciously and the old bush method of warding them off was applied – smoking cow manure in a kerosene tin. One man was appointed the task of periodically walking between the rows of seats and up and down the aisle “censing” the bush cathedral with this strange incense. “It was, however,” remembered Nazarene missionary Doug Pinch, “the house of God to our dear coloured people.”¹ Doug and Maysie Pinch were United Aborigines Mission (UAM) workers to the Bandjalang people of northern New South Wales. In 1945 the Pinches became members of the Church of the Nazarene. This would have a profound effect on them personally as it would lead to their dismissal from the UAM on charges of having adopted false teaching. The manner in which the Nazarene message of holiness as a distinct second work of grace was accepted and adapted among the Bandjalang is the subject of this brief study.¹

In the years following the Second World War, a number of Wesleyan-Holiness churches emerged in Australia, with their origins in the United States, though drawing their leadership from disaffected Australian evangelicals.¹ These included the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Methodist Church (both commencing work in 1945), the Association of the Church of God in Australia (known in the US as the Church of God, Anderson Indiana), relaunching in 1960, decades after an earlier work (1917-1927) had collapsed, and the New Testament Church of God (known in the US as the Church of God, Cleveland).¹ The only one of these churches to have had a significant impact on Indigenous people in its formative years was the Church of the Nazarene, whose work among the Bandjalang people of northern NSW, though short-lived, was a fruitful expression of the Nazarene sense of mission and an honest attempt to establish a truly indigenous Holiness church. In this article I will give a brief description of Wesleyan-Holiness work among indigenous people, survey a number of missiological insights regarding the receptivity or otherwise of Aboriginal people to the Christian message in a variety of settings, and then seek to apply these insights to the work of Nazarene and United Aborigines Mission workers Doug and Maysie Pinch among the Bandjalang.

Wesleyan Holiness churches and Indigenous missions

On a trip to Australia in 1953 Roy S Nicholson, Conference President of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America, was struck by what he called the “pitiable plight” of the Aborigines.¹ His knowledge must have been second-hand as he does not seem to have spent any time in an Aboriginal community of any sort. He noted that “they are expert hunters and alert to all the things which are close to nature’s heart.”¹ Their treatment by the Australian government he thought closely paralleled that of the American government toward the Native Americans, and he requested prayer that something might be done for “this great group in the interior who are said to follow the practices of ‘the Stone Age.’”¹ Despite this concern, Wesleyan Methodists did not establish any work among the first Australians at that time, nor did the Church of God (Anderson) in spite of the early missionary, Carl Swartz’s expressed intention, to “find a way to reach the original Aborigines, if possible.”¹

The New Testament Church of God (Church of God, Cleveland) attracted significant numbers of Aboriginal Christians into its ranks in the 1980s. Tent meetings were regularly held in rural New South Wales from 1979 and throughout the 1980s.¹ In 1980, Aboriginal pastor Edward Hickling, serving the Church of God congregation in Bogabilla, NSW, became not only the first Aborigine to join the Church of God, but the first Australian to receive a ministerial license in that Church. The Pentecostal preacher Gordon Nagas, a Solomon Islander, was ministering among the Aboriginal people at the Tabulam and Woodenbong missions near Kyogle in northern NSW. Nagas was making boomerangs to help finance the opening of an Aboriginal Bible College. He invited American Church of God missionary Bill McAlpin to conduct evangelistic tent missions among the Aborigines, and during this time Bill “learned to throw the boomerang, to hunt, to eat Aboriginal foods such as the kangaroo, turtle, snake, goanna and parrot.”¹ Here was an American evangelist from the South, lately

of Tennessee and Florida, seemingly feeling more at ease with Aboriginal people than many white Australians would feel.

The first unofficial assembly of the Church of the Nazarene in Australia was held in Sydney in October of 1946, when four Australians and one American stood in the shadows of the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylons, the traffic flowing above them.¹ The Rev E E Zachary, superintendent of the Church's Kansas District, had just arrived to serve as director of the infant Australian work. By mutual agreement, the preachers were assigned to their various fields: Albert Berg to Brisbane, Arthur Clarke to Sydney, Alfred Chesson to Adelaide, and Doug Pinch to conduct an investigative tour for the purpose of establishing a base for missionary work among the Aboriginal people, wherever a door of opportunity should open. The Church of the Nazarene saw the establishment of city churches as the 'backbone' of their movement, with Sydney being preferred as the place for Zachary to settle, because of its larger population. Doug and Maysie Pinch, however, felt that "their sphere [was] among the wattles."¹ The Pinches worked for the United Aborigines Mission among the Bandjalang people at Box Ridge in Coraki, about thirty kilometres south of Lismore, NSW. Pinch, a graduate of Sydney Missionary and Bible College, experienced "entire sanctification" after reading Henry T. Smart's book *Thomas Cook's Early Ministry*,¹ and Albert Berg, after meeting American Nazarene serviceman Meredith T. Holingsworth, had begun to send Pinch Nazarene literature.¹ The Pinches had been friends with Albert Berg for over 11 years, and had first met with him on 2 May 1945 to discuss the Church of the Nazarene in detail.

Aboriginal reception and modification of Christianity

The Bandjalang received the Nazarene message of Holiness as enthusiastically as they would later receive Pentecostal influences.¹ Malcolm Calley has documented how, in the 1950s, the Bandjalang had developed stories which explained their own existence in terms of the biblical narrative. They were descendents of the Old Testament patriarch Jacob who had sailed from the Holy Land to the east coast of NSW on a tall ship and been shipwrecked. Twelve tribes descended from the survivors, and the Bandjalang are one of these "lost tribes of Israel."¹ Twelve trees standing in a row in Bandjalang country indicated that Jesus had passed through this land long ago and that these trees were his twelve apostles.¹ To the Bandjalang, "Balugan-Christ" was killed by white people at Kempsey, NSW, is buried on the Arakoon racecourse and will rise again and return to the Bandjalang who, like Christ are humble and poor, rejected by the wealthy and prosperous whites. White people are bound for hell while Aboriginal people are bound for heaven.¹ Anthropologist Erich Kolig found similar stories among the people of the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Here Noah's Ark had been incorporated into their cosmology, the flood being understood as God's wrath against the white people and the Aboriginal people having been saved through the deluge by means of the Ark. God had then given Australia to the black people until the time of Cook's arrival.¹

The resilience of traditional Aboriginal religion has been argued by Kolig (who sees it as "more active and alive than ever"¹) to be the result of its ability to appropriate for its own uses the European influences, ideas and technologies with which it has interacted. While he views traditional Aboriginal religion as still alive and well, he conceded that its emphasis has changed from one of cosmic significance ("an awesome tool used to prop up the universe") to one of social relevance - "the vehicle of ethnic awareness in the wider Australian society."¹ Some in the Aboriginal population of Fitzroy Crossing were viewed by Kolig in the 1970s as having "given up their cultural heritage to a great extent...[and] this loss was thinly glossed over by what appeared [to Kolig] to be a hypocritical facade of Christian fundamentalism."¹

A more positive view of the appropriation of Christianity by Aboriginal people (this time in nineteenth century Victoria) is given by Richard Broome. Bain Attwood's thesis that the adoption of Christianity by Aborigines placed the "seed of oppression... *within* Aborigines as well as *without*,"¹ is according to Broome overdrawn.

Attwood underestimates the degree to which some Aboriginal people voluntarily embraced cultural enlargement and enrichment (not change). European ideas were often in order to assist Aboriginal emancipation in the face of new realities...Aborigines were not always creating oppressions "within" by their actions, for their choices could sometimes liberate them. Schooling and Christianity, though shaped by European notions, produced literate Aborigines who petitioned Parliament for their rights and believed they were the equal of whites in the

eyes of God and destined too for Heaven. Although Attwood sees Christianity as “violent” and missions as “oppressive,” Aboriginal people became Christians by choice. Something he only partially recognizes...To see these people as lured or badgered into Christianity is condescending to those who chose to become “settled down” Christians, and yet still desired to remain Aboriginal.¹

Heather McDonald's research in the East Kimberleys has described the way in which features of traditional Aboriginal religion were combined with the Christian message and how some features of the latter proved very difficult to convey in terms the Aborigines deemed important. McDonald's helpful study is focused on present adherents of the Assemblies of God (AOG) and UAM churches (with some limited material on the Catholic Church) in the small East Kimberley town of Halls Creek, Western Australia. Focusing largely on the oral testimony of Gija, Jaru and Gooniyandi speakers, her central question is, “How did a land-based people who celebrate in ritual their embodied relationship to a fecund universe, embrace a Hellenistic Mediterranean religion of displaced peoples [i.e. Christianity]?” Identifying herself as ‘post-Christian,’ McDonald takes a history of religions approach, anthropologising not only Aboriginal religion but the Western Christianity that displaced it, drawing on Foucault to limit the universal truth claims of Christianity.¹ She concludes her study by stating that “it is possible to trace a continuity of ideas and substance from locative (space-specific) religions to utopian religions [and] a marked disjunction between [them until] indigenous religions came to be read as shocking inversions of ‘true religion.’”¹ The people of the East Kimberley, while influenced by Christianity, have “not exchanged their local, kin-based polity and cosmology for a city-state one.”¹ The strict separation between heaven and earth in Christianity has not been fully embraced and “the earthly realm has maintained its traditional integrity [so that] East Kimberley people [continue to] see themselves as local-regional rather than universal beings.”¹

To Halls Creek Aborigines, conversion is not so much a radically transforming experience of the soul as it is ‘following a way.’ One must cease following the old ways and begin to follow the new Christian ways. The concept of attaining moral perfection does not seem to appeal to the local people and sin is defined in terms of ‘breaking the law’ rather than falling short of perfection. Aboriginal spirituality has not developed a notion of perfectibility. Furthermore, it is not so much the *truth* of the Christian message but its *efficacy* – the ability to achieve desired results - that really counts. In Halls Creek, this focus on efficacy fits well into the AOG stress on the Holy Spirit's power, evidenced by signs, wonders, and miracles. Since the UAM churches have less stress on such things they are considered powerless and ineffective by AOG adherents. Colonization is experienced as a loss of power and the provision of power through the Holy Spirit has a great appeal. Since UAM converts hold more positions of power in both white and Aboriginal bureaucracies, they sense less need for such power.¹

Blood (along with other bodily secretions such as urine, faeces, and semen) is a potent substance in traditional Aboriginal belief, as it contains and conveys ancestral life force.¹ Yet the concept of redemption by means of blood sacrifice so central to the Christian story is foreign to the Halls Creek Aborigines. The blood of Jesus is not something that is seen as atoning for sin but rather something infused in a kind of spiritual blood transfusion which takes out the bad blood, leading to law breaking, and replaces it with good blood, leading to an ability to follow the correct way.¹ All of this means, according to McDonald, that Aboriginal motives for coming forward to the altar do not fit missionary paradigms very neatly.

The people do not bring to the altar an individualised and psychologised soul burdened by guilt because of sins committed. They do not come to repent of sins and seek forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of the Lamb. What they require from God is not soul purification but the strengthening and enlivening of their life-force.¹

Bandjalang reception and modification of Wesleyan-Holiness theology

The themes of blood and purification are evidenced in Doug Pinch's account of a Bandjalang evangelist's sermon, which shows that Aboriginal preachers presented the doctrine and experience of holiness in a manner that reflected their own culture and at the same time appropriated newer insights. Pinch had no problem with this, as is clear from his favourable comments on the following sermon, preached by a Bandjalang tribal elder and Nazarene evangelist.

You remember your initiation ceremony when you “became men.” We asked of you just what God is asking of you in a spiritual way. Firstly, you were young men and your whole life lay before you. To be a worthy man you were sent deep into the woods - you were alone - the nights were dark and unknown. Noises terrified you, but you had to show no fear. You were presenting yourself completely to the Great Spirit. You had to divest yourself of all clothing, no matter how cold and dark the night might be. You had to endure all inconvenience no matter how great the cost. You were not allowed a fire to warm yourselves for you were there to prove your worthiness. You did not eat or drink for many days. And when you had yielded all your resources and were so physically weak that it seemed as if you must perish, you were to lie completely still and then you would feel the spirit of manhood entering in to you, first at the tip of your toes, and then gradually taking over every part of your body. But you were not to resist; no matter how powerfully you were being possessed you had to be completely abandoned to the Great Spirit that would fill every part of your being – thus would you grow to be a worthy candidate for manhood. Then into the sacred cave you had to go for cleansing. Blood would pour upon you from the roof of the cave until you were ceremonially clean...We do not follow heathen customs today but there is an Initiation Service whereby you can prove your spiritual manhood. You present your bodies a living sacrifice to God. You lay aside every weight and you receive without resistance the Holy Spirit. You are then cleansed through and through from all sin.¹

Clearly this is a sermon about life-force, efficacy, empowerment, and initiation, all themes of traditional Aboriginal belief. At the same time it has engrafted the newer Christian concept of purification from sin, effected by the Holy Spirit of God. Though Pinch cannot accept the story of the blood dripping from the roof in the sacred cave, feeling that a more natural explanation is likely, he does not attack it directly, feeling it was not his prerogative to do so.

These Bunjalung [sic] people really believed in the blood coming from the roof of the cave and as it was a sacred rite it was not for us to question. We think that a natural explanation would be a spring water flowing through red ochre or something of that nature...We did not preach Holiness in the manner he did, but then we did not have a full knowledge of the ways and customs of this race of people. We did, however, say a hearty “Amen!” to the message for it was as Scriptural as we knew Holiness Theology to be, and his audience was on his wave-length; the challenge came through to them loud and clear.¹

Pinch was convinced that “the best way to get native people saved and sanctified is by saved and sanctified native men and women.”¹ The indigenization of Aboriginal leadership was seen as an important key to success. Aboriginal Nazarene pastors and evangelists were widely utilized and encouraged in Pinch’s later itinerant work, and it was believed that the best way to reach Aborigines was through Aboriginal ministers.¹ He tells of preaching a sermon at Tuncester, NSW, on 1 John 3:9, “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin.” “From start to finish,” he recalls, “the people hung on every word that was uttered.”¹ Pinch’s hearers were taking what they were hearing and themselves becoming able exponents of the Holiness message in terms familiar to their own indigenous culture and resonating with themes from their pre-Christian traditional beliefs.

This appropriation fits Kolig’s theory of the creative blending of traditional religious ideas with newly arriving ones, as well as Broome’s view of Aborigines as adopting Christianity enthusiastically and not without a sense of positive self-determination.¹ Calley notes the enthusiastic embracing of Pentecostalism by the Bandjalang in the 1950s and the particularly radical strain this took.¹ This matches McDonald’s Halls Creek study which shows a marked preference for a religion of efficacy (or in Holiness and Pentecostal terms, ‘power’) over against one concerned only with forensic righteousness and religious ‘truth.’¹ The Wesleyan-Holiness emphasis on experience and its stress on grace not only as God’s favour to undeserving sinners, but as the empowerment of the Spirit, seems to have struck a chord among the Bandjalang. The trajectory of favouring a religion of power was continued in an extreme measure, according to Calley, who describes the Pentecostal influence on the Bandjalang in the 1950s as having been on the “lunatic fringe,” leading to a distinctive Bandjalang Pentecostal spirituality, “too unorthodox to fit easily into one of the white Pentecostal organizations.”¹

Nazarene missionaries believed that the answer to the supposed instability of Aboriginal converts was to be found in the “confirming grace” of “entire sanctification.” Only when a convert was “fully

sanctified” would he or she be able to avoid returning to the old ways.¹ David Bebbington has shown that the message of the holiness movement in Great Britain in the 1870s was very much an expression of Romanticism, with its ideals of perfectibility and its privileging of direct unmediated experience of God.¹ Though early Australian Nazarenes lived almost a century later, such ideas were mediated to them through the literature of that period – the writings of Samuel Chadwick, Thomas Cook, and Samuel Logan Brengle were their staples. Theirs was a positive view of the power of the Gospel to save from all sin, even if it was a naïve one. Nazarenes had no time for any kind of “Social Darwinist” view of the Aborigines which would see them as somehow doomed by race to be immune to the transforming power of religion. Furthermore, the ‘colour barrier’ was one that had to be gotten over, and the ill treatment and exploitation of Aborigines by white authorities was seen as shameful and a stumbling block placed before missionary success.¹

UAM resistance to the Pinches’ mission

The attitude of willingness to allow Aboriginal preachers to employ Aboriginal culture as a vehicle for proclaiming the Gospel may have been a cause of friction between Pinch and the United Aborigines Mission. According to Calley, UAM missionaries “were generally poorly educated and unsophisticated and thought of aboriginal beliefs not as unfounded superstitions, as many missionaries do, but as ‘doctrines of the Devil.’”¹ McDonald’s more recent study indicates that UAM churches in the Kimberleys are now less damning of Aboriginal culture and spirituality and that the AOG churches have taken the prohibitive stance earlier taken by the UAM. Though both AOG and UAM missionaries hold overall negative views of traditional Aboriginal belief, the AOG stance is decidedly more bleak, holding as they do a “missiology of radical discontinuity.”¹ All Aboriginal sacred sites and practices are seen as demonic and the Christian must have nothing to do with them. Calley sees the earlier practice of the UAM in this area of segregating black and white congregations as “one of the most important factors perpetuating the social exclusion of Aborigines from the religious life of the [white] community.”¹ If this is true, then Pinch’s partnering with Aboriginal evangelists may have been another cause of conflict with the Mission.

The Pinch’s’ work at the Box Ridge Mission was terminated when the UAM leadership charged them with ‘heresy’ over their adoption of Nazarene teaching. The leadership of UAM held doctrinal views that clashed significantly with the message of the Holiness preachers. According to McDonald, the withdrawal of the more liberal Methodists and Congregationalists from the UAM in the 1940s left a more fundamentalist support base of Baptist, Church of Christ and Brethren adherents with a dim view of Holiness and Pentecostal teachings.¹ On Friday evening 18 January 1946, the Pinches were placed on trial in Sydney on a charge of “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.” The following “errors” were charged against them. They believed in a crisis experience of entire sanctification that could destroy original sin. This was deemed “contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures.” They believed in the possibility of apostasy after believing. This was said to be “robbing God of his glory.” They did not believe, as did the Mission (at least as related by Pinch) that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness meant that a believer could “partake of the most grievous sin and yet make heaven” without repentance. After the charges were laid, Pinch calmly testified to his own experience of entire sanctification and “the meeting was in an uproar.” Pinch concludes his account of the proceedings with the understatement, “It was a relief when the gathering came to an end.”¹

Soon after they broke ranks with the UAM, the Pinches received their ministerial license from the Church of the Nazarene. Their departure from this government-recognized missionary society meant that their permits to enter “Native Reservations” were rendered null and void. They now needed permission of the overseer or the local police and this was not always easy to obtain. Deciding to establish an itinerant ministry to the Aboriginal people, they continued to minister alongside Aboriginal evangelists Frank Roberts, Dave Currie, and Angus Phillips, establishing a base on the Tweed River.¹ Phillips was the first Aboriginal person to receive a ministerial license among the Nazarenes. Pastor of the Tweed River, NSW church, he was a gifted speaker and musician, described by Pinch as “one of the godliest as well as gifted men I have been privileged to know.”¹ The relationship between Pinch and Phillips was said to be “one of the closest relationships [our family has] ever known with anybody throughout the whole of our lifetime.”¹ According to Pinch, “Never did a more saintly man grace the ranks of the ministers of the Church of the Nazarene. ‘He walked with God,’ was the only fitting summation of [Phillips’] life. An anointed preacher he elucidated clearly the message of full salvation to his people...Never have I loved a man more dearly than I loved this man...”¹

Among the Nazarene congregation at Tweed Heads, NSW, were some of “the last full-blood aborigines living” in the area. The last of these, Bob Munday, was photographed alongside an American guest, the Rev. Weaver W. Hess, visiting Superintendent of the Oregon District, and died soon after. “It was a sad passing of the remnant of a fine race of people who once built their camp fires, hunted and fished and lived in an area [now known as] the Gold Coast.”¹ The Indigenous Nazarene work has sadly not survived to the present time. The reason for the decline of this work awaits further research.

Epilogue

There is hope for a newly emerging Indigenous work in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition centered in Rockhampton, Central Queensland, among the Murri people of that region. The current North Queensland District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Methodist Church is an Indigenous leader, the Rev. Rex Rigby, who has responsibility for nine churches stretching from Rockhampton to Cairns. The emergence in 2005 of the Baparrdu Fellowship in Rockhampton, led by Rigby and Aboriginal leaders Lester Adams and Shea Taylor, is an encouraging sign.¹ Leaders of the Baparrdu Fellowship and their family members were present at the South Pacific Convention and 46th National Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church held at Phillip Island, Victoria, in January 2008. The didgeridoo was played as a call to worship during an early worship session of the Conference and a Gospel Corroboree was performed.¹ Well-attended seminars led by Lester Adams and Shea Taylor played an important role in introducing non-indigenous Wesleyans to the challenges of being an Aboriginal Australian today. The Bandjalang people served by Doug and Maysie Pinch in Box Ridge and the wider Northern Rivers area creatively and fruitfully appropriated Wesleyan-Holiness theology in culturally relevant ways. In what ways the Murri people of Central Queensland will similarly adapt holiness teaching to their own culture will be the work of future historians to record.

**“Sorry Business”- Opportunities and Challenges
For Christian Mission in Australia.
By Tim McCowan.**

Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was brought to the centre of the nation’s attention by the apology made by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the stolen generations on 13th February this year.¹ Like the majority of Australians, I celebrated this statement of apology as a necessary step in *furthering* reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It was a crucial step, but not the last; there are many steps to go.

The apology was made specifically to those affected by the ‘stolen generations’ the governmental policy of removal of ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal children from their families and communities. But the issues of Indigenous reconciliation encompass more than this one, not least of which are the attitudes and actions of the non-Indigenous community towards Aboriginals, and how Australians understand and speak about their national history. Together with these are matters such as appropriate compensation for past injustices and the addressing of disadvantage in housing, health and education.

Indigenous reconciliation is not just an issue between the government and Aboriginal communities. As a Christian I believe this issue has very profound implications for all Australians, and especially for the church. This is so not only because the Church was integrally involved in the early European settlement of the country which resulted in the dispossession of the original Indigenous custodians, and that it willingly participated with the government in the policy of child removal, but because this issue impinges directly on the Church’s role within God’s mission and how it engages with the wider Australian society.

Indigenous reconciliation gives the church a unique opportunity to reflect on its missional legacy, its willingness to address racist attitudes and to learn models of how it can wisely partner with God and other agencies to see God’s Kingdom grow among the poorest and most disadvantaged communities in Australia. But also the church, having local communities throughout the country and with extensive experience engaging in reconciliation within different groups, is in an ideal position to make a significant contribution towards the healing of this damaged relationship.

Reconciliation has been proposed as the central model for mission today by several leading missiologists, and was examined at recent international mission conferences.² For instance Ross Langmead states:

“Reconciliation is not only a useful metaphor for the work of the Spirit as we co-operate with God in Christian mission; it is an enduring and potentially governing metaphor for the whole of mission. This is true on biblical and theological grounds, but is especially relevant in a world which more than ever exhibits brokenness of relationships at every level. So on theological and contextual grounds we can say that reconciliation is the heart of mission.”³

This is a move beyond the two primary models used since the nineteenth century, which were expansion (in the context of European colonial expansion) and accompaniment (incorporating solidarity, contextualisation and liberation).⁴ But to adopt reconciliation as central does not reduce the importance of other elements, such as the struggle for social justice.⁵ It is my contention that understanding its missional task as reconciliation can greatly enrich the Australian church’s understanding of its role within God’s mission and renew its life and witness.

My aim in this article is to explore some implications for the church from an understanding of reconciliation as its missional calling, in the practical case of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In other words, how and what might the Church contribute to and learn from engaging in Indigenous reconciliation? I will do this firstly by elaborating on a Christian understanding of reconciliation, then contrasting this with some current views from Australia, before finally identifying several key opportunities and challenges for the church in engaging in this ministry of reconciliation in Australia today.

Christian understanding of Reconciliation

The typical meaning of reconciliation is 'being made friends again'. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'reconcile' as to bring again into friendly relations after an estrangement; or to bring back into peace; to set at one.

Although the actual word "reconciliation" is rare in the Bible, the concept is of utmost importance within the Christian tradition. James Denney spoke of it as being "the inspiration and focus of all doctrines of the Christian faith."⁶ In the New Testament, the Greek noun *katallage* (reconciliation) and verb *katallasso* (to reconcile) are typically used for God's supreme act of reconciling humankind or the kosmos to God's self, rather than for relations between people. In these passages, human beings are not actively involved; they are rather granted 'reconciliation', as in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. "The Greek terms suggest a fundamental change, a complete renewal which only God can bring about."⁷ This underlies the truth that genuine reconciliation is chiefly God's work, something that humans can participate in, but not manage.⁸ However, it is also clear that the rebuilding of one's relationship with God facilitates a person's capacity to become more reconciled with others. This is evident in such passages as Ephesians 2: 1-18, where Christ's work is said to have broken down the dividing wall of enmity between Jews and Gentiles; Mark 12: 28-34 and I John 2:7-11 where Jesus and the writer of John's epistle teach that love of God and love of neighbour can not be separated; Matthew 6:9-15 where God's forgiveness is dependent upon one's forgiveness of others' sins, and Matthew 5:24 and 1 Corinthians 7:11 where the call to 'be reconciled' is used specifically for relations between people.

John de Gruchy makes the additional point that, since the root of the Greek term for reconciliation (*'allasso* to exchange) is derived from *'allos* the other, the words carry the sense of exchanging places with the other party, and therefore being in solidarity with that other rather than against them.⁹ In other words, to reconcile "has to do with the process of overcoming alienation through identification and in solidarity with 'the other', thus making peace and restoring relationships."¹⁰ This is what Christians understand God did through Christ. In coming and identifying with humankind, Christ stood in solidarity with humankind and thereby rebuilt a bridge of trust between humanity and God. To be reconciled with someone then involves being able to empathise and understand their perspective, because they know themselves to be like that other person.

Robert Schreiter, who has written extensively on the Christian understanding of reconciliation, distinguishes between two main forms of reconciliation: individual and social. Both forms are pertinent to reconciliation with Aboriginal Australians. The first is the more familiar form of individuals being reconciled with each other. Individual reconciliation is principally about restoring the humanity of the parties, especially in their capacity to trust, in order to create a new relationship between them.¹¹ Significant in this is the spiritual rebuilding within persons that enables the rebuilding of the outward relationship.

In the case of Indigenous reconciliation, this form is evident in the many individual Aboriginal survivors of the 'stolen generation' who have taken their own personal spiritual journey of healing to deal with the pain and injustice of what was done to them. This journey has helped them move beyond bitterness and resentment to a more whole and accepting place. The grace and gratitude that were demonstrated toward the Prime Minister and others by the Aboriginals who were present in Parliament for his apology, was testament to the individual reconciliation they had personally experienced.

The second form is called *social reconciliation*. Scripture acknowledges that there is a social component to sin and wrongdoing, when it speaks of the "sins of the world" (I Jn 2:2), the "whole world is a prisoner of sin" (Gal 3:22 NIV) that "lies under the power of the evil one" and "cannot receive the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17). Connor defines 'social sin' as the "abiding deficiencies or wounds in how society is structured; deficiencies which harm everyone, though differently depending on their social position."¹² Examples include pervasive racism, unjust structures, mass poverty, life being held cheap, and socio-political pressure to suppress the truth. He says "sin becomes embedded in a social structure, when a society's rules are distorted, access to resources is unjustly skewed, and its imagery is deceptive and turns idolatrous."¹³ There thus becomes a need not just for individuals to be reconciled, but the society as well. An example is the governmental policy of removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities and its implementation by the state, church and welfare bodies because it involves social structures and institutions and not just individuals. It therefore pertains to addressing breaches of trust on a wider, social scale, perpetrated by these institutions, collectives or structures of the state against other communities or groups.

Social reconciliation can be defined as a process of reconstructing the moral and social order of a country, to be one where all are safe, the truth is told, justice is done, morality is upheld by the law, and where there is a common, healed memory of the past that forms a strong hedge against further abuses.¹⁴ This moral and social reconstruction of society is so that the wrongdoing of the past can never be repeated. "It is a process- long and difficult- rather than a simple goal which can be easily reached."¹⁵ It involves truth-telling, justice-seeking and peace-making. Like individual reconciliation, it is a spiritual process as much as a strategy. It involves addressing the causes and consequences of wrongdoing through the law, the police and military, and other institutions of society to prevent them from ever happening again. In many instances, the process of social reconciliation itself is the goal.¹⁶

Schreiter further identifies five dimensions of a Christian understanding of reconciliation:¹⁷

1) Reconciliation is first and foremost a work of God; humans can participate in it, be agents of it, but not manage or create it. The magnitude of the damage which has been done is ultimately beyond any human effort at correction. Reconciliation thereby involves more a spirituality than a strategy. It is beyond human imagination.

2) God's reconciling work begins with the victim, not the wrongdoer. This differs from the common-sense understanding, which makes reconciliation contingent on the wrongdoer's apology before forgiveness can be offered. But often the wrongdoer does not repent, or may have died. The healing God works within the victim's life, restoring his or her humanity which had been wrested away in the act of wrongdoing, sometimes makes it possible for the victim to forgive the wrongdoer even before an apology is given or repentance takes place.

3) Reconciliation makes of both the victim and the wrongdoer a "new creation". Through a genuine process of reconciliation, both parties would ideally undergo their respective 'healing journeys' and be brought to a new place, not being returned to their prior state¹⁸.

4) One's stories of healing and reconciliation are given shape in the story of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Suffering is not of itself ennobling; it is only when that suffering is brought into a new social space within wider relationships, (for instance through being interpreted through the larger story of Christ's paschal journey) that it can become ennobling and even redemptive.

5) Full reconciliation will occur only when God is all in all as outlined in the hymns at the beginning of Ephesians (1:7-10) and Colossians (1:15-23).¹⁹

Indigenous understandings of Reconciliation

Schreiter acknowledges there is no agreed upon definition of reconciliation in particular human societies, because the specific circumstances for which reconciliation is needed vary according to the context and the parties involved, and these factors affect the meaning of the term.²⁰ It is therefore necessary to consider more specific Indigenous Australian understandings of the concept for what reconciliation means in this setting.

I have selected just a small sample of Indigenous views to provide some contrast. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation outlined it in their declaration in these terms:

"We acknowledge this land was colonised without the consent of the original inhabitants. Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves. [Reconciliation involves]...a united Australia that respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all."²¹ Their declaration highlights acknowledgment of what happened, recognition of Aboriginal heritage, and a guiding vision of mutual respect and justice.

The former chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Lowitja O'Donoghue, sees reconciliation as a journey involving healing, trust, and a sense of belonging: "[That] Indigenous people would feel the same sense of pride, belonging and ownership in this country as other Australians....We must have faith in the fundamental decency of the Australian people. This faith and trust must be our bottom line. And that is what makes me believe that my journey, our journey will ultimately be a journey of healing."²²

Mick Dodson, the former Deputy Commissioner of the *Bringing Them Home* report, describes it as a social process, involving corporate acknowledgement and respect:

“In a sense, reconciliation is about putting relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia on the proper footing, acknowledgement and understanding of the past, and an acceptance that we’ve got to share the country. And we have to do it in a mutually respectful way, where our worldview and values, and our cultural inheritance is just as legitimate and respected as everybody else’s.”²³

And Evelyn Scott, former chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation writes that:

“...reconciliation is about getting win-win outcomes. If that means we progress slowly—so be it. It could take decades to achieve true reconciliation, but we have come a long way since 1967...The wider Australian community needs to understand that for many Indigenous peoples, recognition and respect for our rights forms the basis of a meaningful reconciliation process. We also need action by governments to ensure our rights are upheld.”²⁴

She acknowledges that reconciliation is for all Australians and is a slow, lengthy process but is worth every step.

Other Australian views

In contrast to these fairly articulate descriptions from the Indigenous community, there appears confusion and ambivalence about reconciliation among many non-Indigenous Australians. In a survey done with non-Aboriginals, many of the respondents who viewed the draft declaration prepared by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, saw it as “divisive backward-looking, based only on the Aboriginal perspective, requiring a series of concessions from the non-Aboriginal Australians without any corresponding ‘give’ by Aboriginal people”.²⁵ They could not appreciate the extent of the wrong done nor how it had adversely affected Aboriginal communities. “There is impatience with, and lack of understanding of, Aborigines who will not conform to general community norms....Most see reconciliation as an Aboriginal issue, not as an issue for all Australians.”²⁶ Hugh Mackay’s assessment is that “the prejudice—revealed most starkly in offensive jokes— is merely an attempt to conceal a deep reservoir of shame about white Australians’ treatment of Aborigines since the beginning of European settlement.”²⁷

A more recent study by Halloran on the attitudes of Australians toward reconciliation, confirms that more needs to be done in the way of public education campaigns to disseminate relevant information. He found that whilst 75% of participants expressed some support for reconciliation, less than 40% had any real knowledge of what it meant.²⁸

Some Opportunities and Challenges for Christian Mission in Australia

It is noteworthy that there are a number of significant similarities between the Christian and Indigenous understandings of reconciliation. Namely, that reconciliation involves a spirituality; it is a relationship more than words or targets, and that it includes social as well as individual dimensions. Despite this congruence however, only small sectors of the church have been engaged in this important missional conversation around Indigenous reconciliation. I believe the Church has a valuable contribution to make as well as important gifts to receive in a ministry of reconciliation with Indigenous Australians. Realising too, the misunderstandings of the issue in the wider community, means the church could significantly assist in education about the process. By this involvement the church could also retrieve some of the richness and breadth of the biblical vision of reconciliation, as it pertains to the Australian context.

1. Getting back to the heart of mission: relationship, more than words

It is clear from both the Christian and Indigenous understandings, that reconciliation is more about relationship between the parties, than on getting the words correct. Crucial as the word of the apology of the Prime Minister was, it was not just about saying sorry so the country can move on. It was acknowledging the truth of what happened in the past, and admitting responsibility, as one step towards restoring trust in the relationship between Indigenous Australians and the State. Nevertheless, I would add that, together with many others, if the apology is genuine, I believe it should include appropriate compensation to the victims.²⁹

However, the Church has at times confused reconciliation with saying the right words. An apt example of this contrast came at an Indigenous-Church consultation on reconciliation held in Western Australia in 1999. The non-Aboriginal Christians were straightforward: “Tell us what we should apologise for, and we will apologise for it.” The Aboriginals remained quiet, preferring not to reply. Then at the end of the meeting, one of the Aboriginal women got up and told the non-Indigenous people present that one of her Aunties had just died. She said “Her funeral will be on Tuesday. We expect you to be there.”³⁰

A part of restoring this relationship involves, where possible, encouraging non-Aboriginals to actually hear the personal stories from the Indigenous community. Such stories would tell of how they have been affected by such things as the government’s policy of removal of their children, and other racially based prohibitions (such as against voting, against using their language and participating in their religious ceremonies) as well as their stories of resilience and survival.

Such ministry would provide a good missional opportunity for the Church, as it seeks to build understanding and healing across the wider society. Without such voices of encouragement alongside Indigenous peoples, reconciliation easily gets pushed again to the margins, and the wider non-Indigenous community do not realise their need to get involved and be healed. Since the church has strong local and grassroots connections with Indigenous peoples across Australia, and there are many Indigenous Christians, the church is well positioned to offer the kinds of safe and hospitable listening circles where such personal journeys of healing of individuals, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can be respectfully heard and responded to. These spaces are crucial for the healing process of individuals, as was evident in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.³¹

2. The truth shall set you free.

To appreciate that reconciliation is about a changed relationship means that non-Indigenous Australians will have to undergo change too. It is not just a matter of addressing disadvantage within Aboriginal communities. The Christian understanding shows that it is important for the non-Indigenous community to be involved, so that their humanity, which was adversely affected by the social sin of racism, may be restored also. Such involvement is needed as well to ensure such racially motivated actions and governmental policies never happen again.

Whilst there have been individual non-Aboriginal Christians who have become involved in local initiatives for reconciliation, and major denominations have issued formal apologies, the vast majority of Australian Christians fail to see the importance of Indigenous reconciliation for their own lives.³² There seems to be a lack of appreciation of how racially discriminatory attitudes among non-Indigenous Australians still persist and negatively affect the Aboriginal community.

Robert Manne writes, “It is impossible to read the stories of separation of Aboriginal children without stumbling, time and again, upon non-Aboriginal Australians for whom this incapacity to grasp the depth of suffering of Aborigines lies at the heart of the harm they inflict.” He says this corresponds with Raimond Gaita’s assessment that the heart of racism is “the blindness to the reality that other people, seen through the prism of racism as lesser, simpler, more primitive, can experience with the same intensity and depth as we do, love and attachment, bereavement and grief.”³³

If the church were to participate in hosting such listening spaces, allowing the wider community to hear the personal stories of Aboriginal dispossession and removal, survival and resilience, they would not only uncover ongoing racist attitudes in society, but provide some public spaces where appropriate steps toward repentance can occur. Only as the non-Indigenous community hear the stories from the victims, can they begin to appreciate the pain of the underlying racism that led to such dehumanisation of Aboriginal peoples. Undoubtedly such exposure will elicit a sense of ‘communal shame’, but this can be an important step toward healing, rather than something to be avoided.

Collective or historic shame is an entirely appropriate response for current generations of non-Indigenous Australians, argues Raimond Gaita. “When our shame is the lucid expression of collective national responsibility for the wrongs done by our ancestors, we have risen in truthful response to the evil in our history—of the fact that it is *our* history. Because it is an acknowledgment of the fact that we must rise in truthful moral responsiveness to the meaning of what we have been caught up in,

often through no fault of our own, it is rightly called an acceptance of responsibility.”³⁴ Robert Manne adds: “While it was morally confused and even wrong for individuals to admit to guilt over acts in which they had played no part, this did not apply to the question of collective or historic shame. Nations were not arbitrary collections of individuals or families living in a permanent present. They were, in the famous phrase of Benedict Anderson, ‘imagined communities’, where the present generation inherited a past and was responsible, as the nation’s custodian, for what was then bequeathed to the future. In a nation’s past there were episodes in which the present generation took a justifiable pride. There were also episodes for which they experienced the burden of shame.”³⁵ Surely the church is one community within society that is able to hold this shame appropriately, so that it can grow into humility and remorse, leading toward greater reconciliation between all Australians. This movement, through hearing the truth of the past, to shame and humble repentance, would bring with it a greater understanding of and respect for Indigenous Australians, as well as awareness of what is needed to overcome discriminatory attitudes. Such awareness is necessary if Australia is to become a more ‘reconciled society’.

An integral part of this process of social reconciliation is developing a collective memory of the past that embraces all the main parties’ stories, and assists everyone to acknowledge that this national story is now a part of them, having permeated their thoughts and feelings. This enables each one to own it, to accept responsibility for the nation’s past. Then “having accepted that this [inherited national story] is *our* past and not a bad dream we can shrug off, we can then begin to make something different and more humanly worthwhile out of it.”³⁶

This listening to the stories of each side helps one grasp something of what they went through, as well as to recognise that their stories become a part of our single communal story of common pain.³⁷ The Church would also grow through this listening, both in its Christ-like capacity to empathise with the victims of wrongdoing, and discover more of the freedom and integrity from honestly facing the truth of one’s past, without denials or excuses.³⁸

3. Mission: attending to the Spirit’s movements

The fact that reconciliation is about relationships more than words, means it is more about being on a journey than reaching a destination; a process more than a goal. This is consistent with metaphors commonly used by the Indigenous for reconciliation, such as “walking together”.³⁹ One “never arrives” at full reconciliation until God is all in all, according to Schreier.⁴⁰ It is usually a slow, lengthy and complex journey that is outside human control. A person or community can easily become discouraged when genuine progress takes so long. It is important therefore, if one is engaged in this work, to have a vital spirituality that adequately sustains one’s connection with God, the spiritual source and initiator of reconciliation.

The spirituality referred to here is more ‘contemplative’ than ‘active’, in that it involves a way of relating with God and others that goes beyond particular ‘spiritual exercises’ that might be practiced in a local church. It requires an attitude of patient watching and waiting for what God may be doing within the heart of the parties, throughout the entire process. This is because the signs or fruit of reconciliation will be predominantly internal, in the changes of heart and attitude toward the other party, more than external changes of practice. This is a challenge for the church that has often measured its effectiveness by external results: the range of persons reached, numbers converted and programs run. It requires a shift from being future goal orientated to focusing on the present moment; from being manager to being partner with God’s Spirit in mission.

Yet, this gives two further opportunities to the Church. Firstly because the church explicitly acknowledges our human need for connection with God (although its practice often falls short of its words) and secondly because the church has rich symbols, stories and rituals that help mark one’s movement along the way to healing.⁴¹ These include rites and sacraments of reconciliation, rituals that assist the process of mourning and healing, death and ‘rebirth’, and powerful stories from Scripture that bring insight and guidance to the way of forgiveness.

4. Rediscovering the social dimensions of mission

It seems that in many Aboriginal communities, a conflict between individuals belonged to the whole community not just to the disputants, so that the responsibility to seek forgiveness and reconciliation

was shared by the whole community.⁴² This understanding perceived reconciliation as a social as well as an individual issue. This is contrary to the common view of non-Indigenous Australians, who understand broken relationships as the private domain of the disputants and not the business of the wider community. This then turns forgiveness into a solely private act of intrapsychic release rather than a means of social healing.⁴³ This has been a frequent point of confusion in discussions around Indigenous reconciliation, since many non-Aboriginals, including Christians and the government, have not understood the distinction between the two.⁴⁴ The view of the former Prime Minister, John Howard, was typical, considering an apology only appropriate for wrongs he had done as an individual. He could not recognise the symbolic importance of an apology from the head of state, for deeds the state had done that were judged by a Royal Commission to be wrong.

Throughout its history, the church has been a strong voice for individual reconciliation between parties in a broken relationship, but has left social issues to the government and its agencies. This is partly a result of a long tradition of separating the powers of the church and the state, to avoid abuses. It is also a consequence of shifts since the Enlightenment, when theology withdrew from the public sphere to focus on private devotion and personal morality. This has led to an unfortunate loss of understanding in the Western Church of the social dimension of the gospel, and of the Church's crucial role in social reconciliation.

There is a need for the church to recover its social, prophetic role, to enter the public square and proactively engage in this wider conversation taking place around Indigenous reconciliation. This is necessary because of the widespread confusion surrounding the meaning and process of reconciliation, especially now that an apology by the Prime Minister has been made. But the Church's own growing, varied and rich experiences of reconciliation, have surely informed its understanding of the issue, as well as underlined its importance for a healthy society. This is a timely opportunity for well-informed Christians to carefully and appropriately engage in this ministry of reconciliation alongside Aboriginal leaders. We are not to impose a Christian understanding onto them, nor seek the spotlight for ulterior motives, but encourage the ongoing conversation, help to educate the wider public, open up spaces for the stories of healing to be shared and heard, as well as discuss the steps which still remain to be taken in local public forums.

5. Mission as becoming God's new creations

One of the most remarkable and inspiring aspects in the ministry of reconciliation is the spiritual transformation of the parties that can occur. It is a restoration of their humanity, but not a return to their former state, for it now includes their experience of wounding. They are brought to a new place, one that could not be imagined or constructed. "It is not a denial or obliteration of the painful experience of injustice or violation; it is a transformation of the experience that will be forever part of who [they] are."⁴⁵ It is an experience of grace, healing and self-transcendence. "Healing comes as a surprise. Forgiveness is more than having the burden of the past lifted. This is the 'new creation' of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 5:17. For this reason, it is the vision of the healed victim which provides the surest guide to reconstruction of a society after conflict."⁴⁶

As mentioned, it follows the pattern of Christ's paschal journey, the pathway from suffering, through death to new life. The person's wounds may still be evident, as are Christ's, but they are no longer drawing him or her down to the past, but can become like 'instruments of healing for others, as Christ's did for the disciples and particularly for Thomas in John 20.'⁴⁷

I find this truth to be a very inviting opportunity for the Church to be involved in the mission of Indigenous reconciliation. The future is open; we do not know and cannot determine how we will all be changed by this involvement, but we will be. In the Prime Minister's words, it will be a new chapter to be shaped and written by all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.⁴⁸

Conclusion

This paper has explored an understanding of mission as reconciliation in the particular case of Indigenous reconciliation in Australia, and has identified some of the challenges and opportunities of this for the Church. This issue is timely and needed, considering the apology of the Prime Minister and the continuing confusion about what reconciliation means for non-Indigenous Australians.

May the Church and its mission agencies accept this God-given challenge: to participate with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in writing the next chapter of our national story, so that it can be one of greater reconciliation with God and with each other.

End Notes

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http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm accessed 20th February 2008.
2. SCHREITER Robert J., *Reconciliation as a Model of Mission*, in **New Theology Review** 10, no. 2 (1997). Stephen B. BEVANS and Roger SCHROEDER, **Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today**, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 389ff and Ross Langmead, *Transformed Relationships: Reconciliation as the Central Model for Mission*, in IAMS (Malaysia: 2004). Conferences such as the *International Association for Mission Studies* (Malaysia: 2004), and the Conference on World Mission & Evangelism: "Come Holy Spirit- heal and reconcile" Athens 9-16 May 2005.
3. LANGMEAD Ross, *Transformed Relationships: Reconciliation as the Central Model for Mission*, p9.
4. SCHREITER, *Reconciliation as a Model of Mission*, pp8-11.
5. SCHREITER Robert J, **Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order**, The Boston Theological Institute Series, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), pp21-25.
6. DENNEY James, **The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation** (London: James Clarke & Co, 1959), p6.
7. MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ Geiko, **The Art of Forgiveness: Theological Reflections on Healing and Reconciliation** (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), p4.
8. Robert J. SCHREITER, **The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies** (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), pp14-16.
9. John W. De GRUCHY, **Reconciliation: Restoring Justice** (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), p51.
10. Ibid, p51.
11. Author's definition adapted from SCHREITER, **The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies**, pp15ff and p111.
12. Bernard F. CONNOR, **The Difficult Traverse: From Amnesty to Reconciliation** (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1998), p84.
13. Ibid, p87.
14. Adapted from SCHREITER, **The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies**. p95, pp111-112.
15. Robert J. SCHREITER, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: The Catholic Viewpoint*, in **Forgiveness & Reconciliation in Croatia Roundtable** (Zagreb and Osijek: 2000), pp4-5.
16. SCHREITER, **The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies**, 113.
17. Robert J. Schreiter, *What Is the Relationship between Liberation and Reconciliation as Paradigms of Mission?* in **SMC Reconciliation**, (ed.) Swedish Mission Council (Sweden: Swedish Mission Council, 2002)., also outlined slightly differently in Schreiter, **The Ministry of Reconciliation : Spirituality & Strategies**, pp13-19.
18. SCHREITER, **The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies**, p18.
19. Ibid, pp14-15.
20. Ibid, p13. Being mindful also of Villa-Vicencio's warning: "A tight definition often goes a long way to bedevilling the reconciliation process. To define hope too tightly, to destroy the metaphor, to overlook the inherent ambiguity of the healing process is to undermine the very goal of reconciliation – which is to bring people together. To name the ideal is to own it. To own is to limit. To define too closely is to reduce poetry to the rules of grammar." in Charles VILLA-VICENCIO, **The Art of Reconciliation**, (Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 2002, 2004), p5.
21. Declaration by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (Australia), *Partnerships in Reconciliation: It's up to Us* (Kingston, A.C.T.: The Council, 1999). And draft declaration quoted in Michelle Grattan, (ed.) **Reconciliation: Essays on Reconciliation** (Melbourne: Black Inc./Bookman Press, 2000), pp305-6.
22. GRATTAN, **Reconciliation: Essays on Reconciliation**, p295.
23. Mick DODSON, quoted in Jenna Hand, *Reconciliation: Bridging the Divide*, **Canberra News**, 25 May 2008.
24. GRATTAN, **Reconciliation: Essays on Reconciliation**, p23.

25. Ibid, p37.
26. Ibid, p36.
27. Ibid, p46.
28. M J HALLORAN, *Indigenous Reconciliation in Australia*, **Journal of Community Applied Psychology** 2007, no. 17 (2006), p14.
29. Noel PEARSON, *Contradictions Cloud the Apology to the Stolen Generations*, "**The Australian** 2008, Feb 12th, p1.
30. Story related by Robert Schreiter in a lecture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago in February 2000.
31. See for instance, Desmond Tutu, **No Future without Forgiveness** (New York: Doubleday / Image, 1999).
32. Most Church denominations in Australia have made formal apologies for their part in the removal and separation of Aboriginal children from their families and communities. See for instance, HREOC, **Bringing Them Home: Report of National Inquiry into Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families** (Sydney: HREOC, 1997). Section: Social Justice Report 1998, Chapter 3: *Church responses*.
33. Robert MANNE, **The Way We Live Now: The Controversies of the Nineties** (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1998), p35.
34. Raimond GAITA, **A Common Humanity: Thinking About Love & Truth & Justice** (Melbourne: Text Pub. 2000), 102.
35. Robert MANNE, *Sorry Business: The Road to Apology*, **The Monthly** March 2008, no. 32 (2008), p6.
36. CONNOR, **The Difficult Traverse: From Amnesty to Reconciliation**, p143.
37. Ibid, p112.
38. David W. AUGSBURGER, **Helping People Forgive**, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996). Ch 2.
39. See for example, The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (Australia). **Walking Together: Building Better Relationships between All Australians** ([Parkes A.C.T: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1994).
40. SCHREITER, *What Is the Relationship between Liberation and Reconciliation as Paradigms of Mission?*, p19.
41. SCHREITER, **Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order**, pp74-79.
42. PATTEL-GRAY Anne and University of Sydney. School of Studies in Religion, **Aboriginal Spirituality: Past, Present, Future** (Blackburn, Vic.: HarperCollins Religious, 1996), TRUDGEN Richard Ian, **Why Warriors Lie Down & Die: Towards an Understanding of Why the Aboriginal People of Arnhem Land Face the Greatest Crisis in Health and Education since European Contact: Djambatj Mala** (Darwin: Aboriginal Resource & Development Services Inc, 2000), Augsburger, **Helping People Forgive**, p 14. This is also true in many communal (non-Western) cultures and the predominant view in the New Testament.
43. AUGSBURGER, **Helping People Forgive**. David Augsburger laments this shift, when he says: "In privatising the experience, individualizing the goal, treating the intra-psychic, we have drained forgiveness of its power to reknit the torn fabric of society...Helping people forgive is our calling, our vocation as persons, whether we are in the helping professions formally or offering help informally in the daily brushes and abrasions" AUGSBURGER, **Helping People Forgive**. (p ix)
44. For instance, at a "Sorry Day Ceremony" a few years ago, I listened as an Anglo-Australian man asked an Aboriginal man: "Do you have anything against me?" "No" said the rather nonplussed Indigenous Australian. "Neither do I. So I don't need to apologise for anything do I?"
45. SCHREITER, **The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies**, p17.
46. SCHREITER, *What Is the Relationship between Liberation and Reconciliation as Paradigms of Mission?*, p19.
47. John 20: 24-29. See also SCHREITER, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: The Catholic Viewpoint*" p3.
48. His speech included these words: "*For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written...A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping*

the next chapter in the history of this great country.”

http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm accessed 20th February, 2008.

Book review

Remaking: a workbook for spiritual formation, A collaborative project of Solace, Northcote, Victoria: Solace EMC Inc.2006.

Lynette Dungan has been an ordained Uniting Church minister for the past 13 years. She is a spiritual director and has completed a Masters in Theology (*Seeking Vision: Revelation in Contemporary Theology; Discerning God in the Crisis*). She has a passion for spiritual formation and ongoing supervision for Spiritual directors. Lynette is also part of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction. Lynette is minister at Warrandyte uniting church, Vic.

Remaking is a compilation of the Solace community's reflections on integrating faith into everyday life. This book is a good starting point for exploring and understanding Christian practices although it does not explore individual practices or ways at depth. The book elicits the invitation to "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8) but is not as clear in its invitation to engage in discipleship and mission. Its focus is more on enabling practices for individuals than on enabling faith communities to develop and worship in new and committed ways in fidelity to Christ's commandments to love. *Remaking* would help people respond to following Jesus by reflecting on guiding questions and frameworks more than seeking answers. *Remaking* thus offers space to reflect, consider, and commit to new ways that can issue in changed attitudes and behaviours.

Remaking would appeal to those who are disillusioned by the institutional church and want to explore new ways of being faithful. The use of varied testimonies is helpful in showing how people's stories of faith connect to their choices. The repeated questions in Part Two links with generations X and Y's desires to gain what they want in life. Questions such as what do "I want to be in the habit of...[or] I want to be known as someone who is seen as..." and address the missional intent of exhibiting a Christ-like character to let one's deeds and lifestyle image one's faith and beliefs.

The book encourages Christian practices in a process of spiritual development called *Transforming grace*. This process is achieved via exploring "7 Ways" - *the everyday, contemplation, seeking the spirit, relating, holiness, justice and learning and understanding*. These encompass questions, personal reflection and actions to foster and increase the awareness of God in our lives by practising it with others in small groups. These ways emphasise understanding and action over experience and being. Consequently, spiritual formation is understood as addressing questions, issues or habits to foster intimacy with God. For example, contemplation is described more in terms of what you do, rather than a way of being and focussing on our awareness of God.

Remaking is an innovative attempt to be broad in scope and simple in format. It aims to be ecumenical in breadth with insights from Australia and overseas from Catholic, Protestant, evangelical and emerging church sources. *Remaking* draws on contemporary and traditional wisdom, including such diverse offerings as Quaker insights and an excerpt on Jelaluddin Rumi, a Sufi teacher, as an exemplar of a spiritual leader. Different genres used include testimony, reflections, exercises, pictures, teaching from Scripture and graphics for meditation. These tastes and tidbits, in the post-modern way, provide snapshots rather than explanations, without the invitation to stay with any one thing for an extended period. The book functions like a smorgasbord meal where one can taste different options and combine different courses without staying long enough to savour each unique course. To go further than this initial tasting, a sequel book is needed which explores in depth a couple of options or ways in spiritual formation.

Future editions of this book may consider the following suggestions. First, inclusive language should be used to describe God. Second, the seemingly simple exercises are actually rather complex and challenging without further interpretation and engagement with others rather than doing them individually. Third, further exegesis in some biblical interpretation is needed; e.g., to interpret the call to "punish and enslave one's body" (1 Cor 9:24-27) as being "preparation, which makes us good people" neglects the passage's appeal to be disciplined like an athlete as part of an overarching call to discipleship. Fourth, the appeal to *Transforming Grace* implies a work ethic with the workbook asking participants to engage in challenging exercises and plans. The invitation to seek and live God's *Transforming grace* is good but remains questionable if based solely on achieving goals or exhibiting right actions, because grace by definition is sheer gift. Fifth, the book's concluding individualised question "How might I bring the right spiritual practice to my world?" could be enhanced

with a corresponding invitation to connect our individual, sacred stories with God's story, thereby affirming we are all, as Gillard's song puts it, "pilgrims on a journey and companions on the road".

Remaking is a helpful introduction to what remains a lifetime's journey to be remade by the Spirit and growth in faith, in being Christ's body in the world. The book's call to practise "the Way of Justice" and "be co-creators in renewal and reconciliation" is both timely and imperative to being missional in Australia and the global community.

Lynette Dungan
Minister Warrandyte Uniting Church

DO CHRISTIANS KNOW HOW TO BE SPIRITUAL? THE RISE OF NEW SPIRITUALITY, AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

John Drane. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005.

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

Over the last year almost all of the significant faith discussions I have had with family and friends outside of church circles have related to new expressions of spirituality. What can we learn from religious systems of the Australian Aboriginal Dreaming and American first nations? How does spirituality and a sense of meaning relate to health? What are the themes to learn from in *The Celestine Prophecy* and *The Da Vinci Code*?

With this burgeoning interest in spiritual things, an unapologetically missional book like *Do Christians Know How to be Spiritual?* is welcome. John Drane, practical theologian and author of *What is the New Age Still Saying to the Church*, wrote the lectures for the 2004 London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity that led to this book. The book draws on a wealth of research on how spirituality is perceived in the Western world today.

Drane surveys the move from 'Religion' commonly regarded as controlling, prescriptive, narrow-minded and ultimately damaging, to 'Spirituality' popularly perceived as life-giving, nurturing and personally empowering. This is a move represented by growing institutional mistrust and burgeoning interest in mystical and esoteric practices. But it is also evident in everyday life experiences such as how people see friendship and good food, and in the workplace and the sciences. The new field of neurotheology is exploring how biology, genetics and chemistry suggest that being 'spiritual' is not just a Christian or religious activity but a human activity.

I particularly appreciated being provoked to think about some of his practical suggestions for responding:

- not demonizing the New Spirituality: 'From a missiological perspective, the sense of emptiness, and the need to fill the spaces with something of meaning – even if it is only organic food or environmentally friendly washing powder – represents a desperate search for reality in our culture, which Christians should neither ignore nor ridicule' (p.63).
- using imagery of new life and journey rather than predominately language of death and war.
- talking about story and experience of God and not just philosophical abstractions: 'Evangelism is more about inviting others to join us on the journey, because we share the same questions, than it is about selling people the 'right' answers to life's problems' (p.143).
- fostering emotion as well as intellect, intuition as well as rational thinking, and artistic as well as philosophical approaches: 'for God to be reduced to reasonableness is rather dull and unattractive' (p.139).
- hearing afresh ourselves the call to follow Jesus: 'We have something to share with others not because we are different, but because we are no different, and we can become credible witnesses not as we condemn others and dismiss what we regard as their inadequate spiritualities, but as we constantly listen to the gospel and appropriate its challenge in our own lives' (pp.160-161).

He promises more application and mission implications in a coming book, but in a book titled *Do Christians Know How to be Spiritual?* I would have loved to have read more practical discussion of how to develop authentic biblical spirituality and community. He alludes to playful spirituality, celebrating the perspectives of women's spirituality, sharing with storytelling and asking appropriate questions but his examples of how these are expressed are limited. I suppose, again, the challenge is over to the reader to reflect on and implement the implications.

Darren Cronshaw is a student and teacher of practical theology and works with Baptist Union of Victoria and Forge Mission Training Network.

Mission Shaped Spirituality: the transforming power of mission
Church House Publishing, UK. 2006

Reviewed by Lynette Edge

(Captain) Lynette Edge is the Assistant Training Principal of The Salvation Army Booth College, Sydney.

The back cover of Mission Shaped Spirituality enjoins those with bookcases heavy with missional 'how to' books to put them aside for a moment and engage with this book and its call to be missional people whose spirituality invigorates and compels them to mission.

Mission Shaped Spirituality is another in the series which has developed from the Mission Shaped Church report from the Anglican and Presbyterian churches in the UK. Other books in the series include Mission Shaped Rural ministry and Mission Shaped Children, amongst others.

This book is a very accessible and highly readable call to what the author calls, 'apostolic spirituality'. Spirituality is defined as a 'life lived towards God' (xiii) and apostolic spirituality is a spirituality which will engender and support a missional engagement with the world (page 3).

Susan Hope wishes to pass on to her readers how to live the missional life rather than how to engage with missional activities. This simple book explores a range of ways that missional spirituality can take root and be lived out in the lives of Christians today.

Throughout this book Susan Hope takes ideas which have become familiar to those in the missional church movement, and makes them accessible to Christians in an every day kind of way. One such example is the chapter entitled 'Seeing'. In this chapter she talks about how to live life with heightened awareness to the world and how this will in turn lead us into action in a holistic way.

Hope takes other themes and explores them in chapters with the headings such as 'Come to Go' and 'Called to Sent', 'Live trustingly', 'Take nothing for the journey' and 'Go two by two'. She concludes by exploring how the journey might unfold and what an adventure this life lived in mission might be.

As a testimony to this book, I was talking to a friend the other day that had read and loved this book. She has not heard of or read anything from the emergent church movement, Mike Frost or Brian McLaren, yet through this book she felt the challenge of the *missio Dei*, of being incarnational rather than attractational and engaging with the social injustices in our world.

This book helps bridge the gap from a range of ideas about mission to an exploration on how those ideas might be experienced in the life of the follower of Jesus. Whilst Susan Hope gives us ideas for deepening our missional spirituality, she also shares stories along the way which help us engage with people who are already doing so and with whom we can connect.

This is not an academic read and will leave anyone looking for a weighty exploration of the issues a little unsatisfied. However if you are looking to engage with missional spirituality personally, or are wanting to share the insights of the missional movement with those with whom you minister, then I highly recommend this book.

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

THE NEW BELIEVERS: RE-IMAGINING GOD

Rachel Kohn

Sydney: HarperCollins, 2003

Rachel Kohn has taught religious studies in universities but is more well known for her religious documentaries on ABC TV and her weekly Radio National program *The Spirit of Things*. Her book *The New Believers* explores how a diversity of spokespeople and religions are reshaping their spirituality and conceptions of God. The myriad of opinions she draws on are from mainstream religious leaders (priests, rabbis, gurus, psychotherapists and theologians) and non-institutional expressions of people interested in higher aspirations and values. She discusses how these 'new believers' are re-imagining God to embrace Westernised Buddhism, environmentalism, the arts, the self-help movement, spiritual psychotherapy, scientific discoveries and/or new readings of the Bible. Recognising that old ways and rigid formulas are not working for many, especially women, she generally applauds experiments and fresh questioning as an aid to renewal:

The most significant ingredients in all the trends that are represented by the writers, researchers and thinkers whose ideas are discussed here is their open critique, their unfettered research and their daring exploration into new expressions of faith, all of which contribute to the richness of our religious culture. It is not only the challenge that they pose to the individual which is to be valued, but also the wake-up call they send to the religious establishment, which often can be impervious to the currents of change affecting its congregations and perplexed by demands it has not foreseen (p.194).

Nevertheless Kohn is discerning about the undermining of morality and the danger of religious extremism. For example, she questions the dismissal of morality in Neale Walsch's popular *Conversations with God*. She argues it is imperative Islam changes its approach to *jihad*, *shariah* and honour killings. And she condemns the catastrophe of sexual abuse in churches and domestic abuse in Jewish households. Rather than holding back out of a misguided sense of political correctness or sensitivity, she contends we need to call religions to account for their shortcomings as well as celebrate seeds of renewal.

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James Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: Mission Theology of the Old Testament*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006, pp. 180 – Format 15.5 x 23.5 cm. – ISBN 1-57075-654-6. US \$28.00

If someone is looking for a book that discusses systematically the mission aspects in the Old Testament, *Israel and the Nations* is the book that one should have; for Okoye's fourteen-chapter book examines hermeneutically the mission theology in the Old Testament in four different categories: (1) universality of salvation and universality of righteousness, (2) "community-in-mission," (3) "centripetal mission," and (4) "centrifugal mission."

In the first mission category, Okoye uses Genesis 1-2:1-4a (discussed in Chapter 3), Psalm 8 (Chapter 4), and Gen 12:1-3 (Chapter 5) to illustrate his point, i.e., Yahweh's salvation is not intended for only one race, but rather for all, because God's nature is universal. For instance, God's creation presented in Genesis 1-2:1-4a is intended for all humanity, male and female. The theme of God's sovereignty over the universe and God's entrusting to all human beings the well-being of creation illustrated in the first narrative of creation is described again in Psalm 8. Through the call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-3, God's mission intention for all humanity is undoubtedly depicted and confirmed. In "community-in-mission", Okoye argues that the existence of Israel's community is a manifestation and a means of God's glory and salvation to Israel and all the nations. Okoye uses Exodus 19:3-8 (Chapter 6), Amos (Chapter 7), and Jonah (Chapter 8) to demonstrate this second mission category. For instance, it is through Israel that God's salvation has been manifested (Ex 19:3-8). In addition, God is not the God only of Judah and Israel, but rather of all nations (Amos 1-2, 9:7). Thus, through the elected nation Israel, God's inclusive salvation reaches out to all nations. The prophet Jonah and the people of the city of Nineveh vividly represent the relationship between Israel, people of all nations, and God's salvation. The third category, "centripetal mission," is manifested through the theology that surrounds Mount Zion (Psalm 96, Isa 2:2-5), the divine place that people of all nations will stream towards in order to worship Yahweh; for from this mountain, God's instruction has been revealed and taught to all humanity (Chapter 10 and 11). The last category, "centrifugal mission," deals with Israel's efforts to include the Gentiles into Yahweh's covenant, in particular after the exilic periods (Chapter 12, 13, and 14). This mission aspect is illustrated in Zechariah 14 and Isaiah (19:16-25, 56:1-8, 65:17-25, 66:18-24).

At the end of each main chapter is a discussion that enables the reader to summarize and reflect on the material of the chapter. Chapter 1: The Hermeneutics of Mission in the Old Testament, and Chapter 2: A Brief Survey of Trends in Mission are two concise summaries of the history of mission and theology of mission in the Old Testament's period and the period after Christ. Chapter 11: The Primacy of the Righteousness of God serves as the transitional chapter to prepare the reader to grasp the concepts of "centripetal mission" and "centrifugal mission."

In reading *Israel and the Nations*, one might be surprised to discover that the Old Testament's writings virtually describe the theology of mission though not in as many ways as in the New Testament's writings. I studied one course, Amos, with James Okoye in the Summer of 1999 at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. Now reading his book, I had the feeling that I was attending his lecture again. I enjoyed his lecture in 1999, and I also enjoyed reading his book.

Michael Nguyen, SVD

Walking in the Light: Reflections on the East African Revival and its link to Australia
Colin Reed. Brunswick East: Acorn Press, 2007. 278pp.

In recent years historians of the modern missionary movement have begun to appreciate, and investigate, the two-dimensional impact of the work of Western missionaries. Firstly, and most obviously there is the impact on the people to whom the missionaries have been sent. In the past this was the sole focus of missionary writings; critical examinations of the impact of Western missionaries on the societies which received them. However, it is now recognised that there is a kind of 'reverse mission', that is, as missionaries send back reports of their work, and come home and speak to supporters then the sending churches and mission agencies are themselves not just informed, but influenced by the news of what is happening 'on the field'.

Colin Reed's reflections on the 20th century East African revival is both a study of the revival and the part Australian missionaries played in the revival, but also, and perhaps most importantly the impact of the revival on these missionaries and through them the church back in Australia.

Reed is well qualified to speak on this topic. He was born in Africa of missionary parents during the early years of the revival, from the 1930's to 1940's, and has served himself as a missionary in East Africa, as well as working in mission administration and education with CMS-Australia. This highly readable account of the revival is a reworking of his doctoral thesis.

Reed begins with an overview of the beginnings of the revival, recording the various and mixed responses of the Western missionaries to these manifestations of Christian enthusiasm. Some embraced it wholeheartedly, while others viewed it with considerable discomfort. As a measure of the impact of the revival Reed observes that thirty-five years after its beginnings the Revival had become so much a part of the life of the church that 90% of all the clergy of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, including the whole of their national leadership, together with prominent laymen belonged to the Revival Fellowship (p.108). Reed outlines the early history of the Anglican church in East Africa discussing, among other things, the debates over which comes first in missionary praxis, civilization or evangelization. One of the many strengths of the book is Reed's sober analyses, which avoid sweeping generalizations.

The book then explores the impact of the Keswick movement on the missionaries who were sent to Africa at this time. The next two chapters provide illuminating insights into African religious experience. In the chapter 'Walking in the Light' Reed explores some of the key features of the revival itself, most notably the controversial practise of the public confession of sin.

Apart from two chapters on the Mau Mau uprising and its impact on the revival, much of the remainder of the book explores the symbiotic relationship between the maturing African church and Australian Christians, in particular evangelical Anglicans. Appropriately, a chapter is devoted to the highly influential visits of African leaders Festo Kivengere and Yohana Omari to Aboriginal communities in Northern Australia in 1959. The importance of these visits for the eventual growth towards spiritual and ecclesiastical independence have been well attested, and Reed makes a significant contribution to our understanding of these events.

In recent years we have begun to see the publication of more works on Australian missiology. This is a most encouraging development. Reed's book focuses on the work of CMS-Australia and therefore it will be of particular interest to Anglicans, and Sydney Anglicans in particular. Nevertheless, this very accessible piece of historiography makes a welcome and significant contribution to the growing library of works on Australian missiology.

Michael Raiter
Principal Bible College of Victoria
Book Review

Emerging Downunder: Creating New Monastic Villages of God by Ray Simpson and Brent Lyons Lee. Published by: ATF Press, Adelaide, 2008.

Ray Simpson is a retired Anglican minister from the UK who is now Guardian of The Community of Aidan and Hilda based on Holy Isle in the UK. Brent Lyons Lee is leader of an emerging church community in Norlane, Victoria, Australia. Both men have a deep interest and experience in the emerging church movement and its relevance to mission. The authors met at Holy Isle and Simpson made a subsequent visit to Australia at Lee's invitation. This book is a result of the meeting of minds and experiences of these two men.

The book's thesis is that the Western medieval church model is obsolete – its emphasis on power, patriarchy, “one size fits all”, and its belittling of other religions jars with modern culture. It has become fragmented, defensive and is in retreat. Simpson and Lee argue that a new model of church is needed, one that emphasises the Beatitudes rather than the Creeds, relationships rather than regulations - a church which focuses on hospitality and learning, integrates worship and work, encourages creativity and the arts, and connects with the land and its rhythms of life. It must connect with indigenous culture and be a church of reconciliation and social justice. They see these qualities reflected in the ancient Celtic church and its fluid monasticism and they advocate Christian communities based on this model and the Celtic attitude to spirituality.

Chapter 1 gives Simpson's reflections on his time in Australia. These reflections, particularly his comments on Aboriginal spirituality and what it can teach the West, are most illuminating. Chapters 2-4 inclusive are a condensed version of Simpson's previous book *Church of the Isles: A Prophetic Strategy for Renewal* (Kevin Mayhew, Buxhall, 2003). These chapters cover the shortcomings of the medieval Western church model, the need for change, and arguments for emerging churches as a model for mission based on the Celtic approach to building Christian communities. Chapter 5 describes two emerging church communities in Australia and New Zealand - Urban Vision in New Zealand and Urban Seeds in Melbourne, Australia. The chapter also describes the basic philosophy of The Community of Aidan and Hilda in the UK. Chapter 6 argues the case for “new monasticism” as a model for mission, based on the Celtic model of monasticism. The Epilogue is a collection of reflections, including liturgies and prayers, based on the principles advocated in the book.

This book is a good introduction to the concept of “emerging churches”. It is particularly relevant to Western Christians who are looking for fresh ways of being the church and connecting to local culture. It is readable and avoids theological jargon and is very much grass-roots theology. Because of this, the book has a “we are feeling our way here” touch to it, and this is refreshing. The book does not argue for a re-creation of Celtic monasteries, but rather argues for a re-capturing of the principles and features of the Celtic approach to Christianity and mission. The book includes valuable modern prayers and liturgies, and illustrates with examples the need to make “meaningful connections between people, restoring relationships of love and justice, caring for the earth, and discovering spiritual life”.

Regrettably, the authors perpetuate the age-old error of describing the Orthodox Churches as the Eastern Church, whereas the Eastern Church is actually the forgotten East Syrian Church which brought Christianity to Asia in the first millennium. Thankfully, the history of the East Syrian Church and its liturgical treasures are being rediscovered and this book needs to acknowledge this.

Any other deficiencies in the book are mostly cosmetic and could be remedied in a future printing. For example, the book shows evidence of hasty proof-reading – e.g., occasional missing small but important words, missing full-stops, and headings appearing on the last line of a page. Citing sources is inconsistent - some references show author, source, and date, whereas others only give the author. It would be helpful also if Simpson's and Lee's chapters could be clearly identified, especially when “I” is used. The flow of the book would also be helped by inserting connecting “segues” between the chapters - as they stand, the chapters lack integration. Likewise, the reflections in the Epilogue are lumped together without articulation. The book includes a number of valuable website addresses throughout the text – a consolidated list of these at the back of the book to enhance the Index would be useful.

These deficiencies notwithstanding, the book is refreshing and stimulating in its approach to mission. It is most relevant to the Australian context, and I hope there is more to come.

Ross Mackinnon
Yarra Theological Union

Book Review

The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Melanesia and Micronesia, 1850-1875. By Ralph M. Wiltgen. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2008. xvi+580p. ISBN 13-978-1-55635-209-6.

This is the second volume in what was intended to be a multi-volume history of the Roman Catholic Church in Melanesia and Micronesia. The first volume covered the period 1825 to 1850. However, this will be the final volume, since the author died early in 2008 and this work was published posthumously.

The work has the same strengths found in the first volume. The topic, first of all, was very carefully and thoroughly researched, using the archives of the Propaganda (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith – now known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) and of the Missionary Congregations involved in the mission work in the South Pacific (Marists, Milan Institute for Foreign Missions, Society of Saint Joseph and the Sacred Heart [Mill Hill] and the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary [Picpus]). Secondly, the author knew well the languages that were used in the correspondence – French, Italian, Latin, and English – and has made not only the contents of these documents but also lengthy quotations from them available to the reader in flowing English. Thus it becomes a valuable treasury of primary sources in English. Finally, the author has gathered documents and maps coming from the period and reproduced them in this volume. It is a fascinating story about the missionaries, their Superiors, and the “Propaganda”.

However, it also suffers from the same two weaknesses as did the first volume. The author, who is a very good historian, has opted to report in great detail the correspondence that took place with the result that the material at times is repetitive. A summary statement of the correspondence would have been more useful. Also, although the title speaks of “the founding of the Roman Catholic Church” there is very little in the book about the people who were converted or the churches that were founded. The story is rather that of the missionaries.

Having said that, I can say that I enjoyed reading this massive volume. Ralph Wiltgen (once my teacher) was a journalist as well as a historian, and he knew how to tell a story and hold one’s interest. I learned a great deal from the volume. I had not fully realised before reading this book how physically challenging the Melanesian missions were in terms of sicknesses and isolation, how complicated the relations were between the various Congregations, how the Propaganda in this period began to micro-manage the development of the territories in the mission world, and how the six-month to a year delay in correspondence could cause confusion and misunderstandings as well as hurt.

This volume tells a very human story of the people involved in the spread of the gospel into this part of the world and gives a wonderful insight into the world they came from and the experiences they had. Through the letters, often quoted at length, one begins to sense an appreciation and even affection for the people involved. However, another historian will have to tell the story of the people who heard the gospel and responded to it by becoming the Roman Catholic Church in Micronesia and Melanesia.

Larry Nemer. The reviewer is President of Yarra Theological Union and Lecturer in Mission History.

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ⁱⁱⁱ MERTON, Thomas, **Contemplative Prayer** (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), p25.

^{iv} LEUNIG, Michael, **When I Talk to You: A Cartoonist Talks to God** (Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins, 2004), in CRONSHAW, Darren, **Credible Witness Companions, Prophets, Hosts and Other Australian Mission Models** (Melbourne: Urban Neighbours of Hope, 2006), pp32-37.

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 40. TOTTERDELL, Barb, 'Edge of Chaos Solace', unpublished class paper, Melbourne: Ridley College, p. 4.
 41. See www.GreeningAustralia.org.au/GA/VIC/; www.cleanup.com.au/au/GetInvolved/clean-up-australia-day.html.
 42. SOLACE, '#4'; SOLACE, participants, 'Focus Group #5 by the Author', Fairfield, 29 October 2006.
 43. WALDRON, #1.
 44. MACLEAN, 'The Ways of Solace'.
 45. SOLACE, #1.
 46. MACLEAN, #1.
 47. SOLACE, Website.
 48. MACLEAN, #1.
 49. DAVEY, #1.
 50. Solace Sunday service, 10 September 2006.
 51. MACLEAN, 'The Ways of Solace'.
 52. MOFFAT, 'What Kind of Church?'
 53. This quintain is used at Solace events to illustrate the set structure:
 - First line: one word = subject
 - Second line: two words = subject explained
 - Third line: three words = subject in action
 - Fourth line: four words = a feeling about or produced by the subject
 - Fifth line: five words = subject, but a different word to first line.
- For other poetry see SOLACE, Life - Reflections (2006 [cited 5 October 2006]); available from <http://www.solace.emc.org.au/dev/reflections.html> .