

Transforming Work

# Theology and Mission in World Christianity

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# Transforming Work

*Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*

*Edited by*

Darren Cronshaw  
Steve Taylor  
Marguerite Kappelhoff



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## Notes on Contributors

*Kenneth J. Barnes*

is Mockler-Phillips Professor of Workplace Theology and Business Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (USA). Previously, he was founding Dean of the Marketplace Institute at Ridley College, Melbourne (Australia), and a Chaplain and Tutor in both Theology and Business at the University of Oxford (UK). Prior to his academic career, Dr. Barnes combined parish ministry with life as an international executive, doing business on six continents for large multinational organizations. His areas of expertise are the intersections of faith, work and economics, and Christian apologetics. He has written numerous books and articles including *Redeeming Capitalism* (2018), a biblical/theological critique of global capitalism, and “Religion and Business Ethics: Religious Perspectives on Business” in *The Routledge Companion to Business Ethics* (2018).

*David M. Benson*

is the Director of Culture and Discipleship at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity ([licc.org.uk](http://licc.org.uk)). Formerly he lectured in practical theology, worldviews, apologetics, evangelism and faith–work integration at Malyon Theological College (Australian College of Theology). His work concerns pluralistic dialogue and the public expression of Christian faith in a post-Christendom context, toward the flourishing of all. Alongside Kara Martin and Andrew Sloane, he is the editor of *Transforming Vocation: Connecting Theology, Church, and the Workplace for a Flourishing World* (2021).

*Jon Bergmann*

works at AVENIR Leadership Institute (<https://avenirleadership.org/>) and is one of the founders of the Centre for Faith and Life. Over the past 15 years he has been a pastor, lecturer in theology and director of vocational education for Vose Seminary in Western Australia. He is also part of a number of projects that aim to cultivate a thoughtful and empathetic faith, as the Christian church shifts into a new era. Jon holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Theology and is currently completing a Juris Doctor at the University of Western Australia.

*John Bottomley*

B.A. (Hons), Dip. of Sociology, M. Min., is a member of the Religion and Social Policy Network at the University of Divinity, a Uniting Church in Australia minister, and Director of Transforming Work. He is author of the book *Hard*

*Work Never Killed Anybody: how the idolisation of work sustains this deadly lie* (2016) on the prophetic and pastoral challenges of work-related death and bereavement support.

*Darren Cronshaw*

is Professor of Practical and Intercultural Theology with Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity), a Baptist church pastor (most recently at AuburnLife Baptist Church 2010–22) and Chaplain with the Australian Army. He has a DMin from Australian College of Theology on contextual theology and a DTheol from University of Divinity on missional church. From 2016–2022 he was the Oceania representative on the Executive Committee of International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS). Darren is the author/editor of 11 books including *Credible Witness* (2006), *Sentness* (with Kim Hammond 2014) and *Dangerous Prayer* (2017).

*Sarah Do*

has a Master of Divinity from Whitley College (University of Divinity), with a minor thesis on Philippians. She has developed a passion for supporting CALD/LOTE students in theological studies at Whitley College. Beyond the academic field, she has ongoing devotion and commitment to serving at her local Vietnamese church community, where she is an active contributor to the Children's ministry.

*Garth Eichhorn*

a retired Baptist minister held pastoral positions across Australia for over forty years and along the way completed a DMin in marketplace ministries in 1986. His interest in the growing secularity of Australia led him to form Western Urban Associates (WA) Inc in 1996 as a local mission house for projects including long and short term urban ministries into SEXPO, the city's retail sector and finally the founding of street chaplaincy across the state of Western Australia. He has written a number of articles around the essential role of the Bible in urban mission.

*David Fagg*

is a recent PhD graduate from Deakin University, Melbourne, and a qualified secondary school teacher and youth worker. Beginning in the mid 1990s, he worked as a volunteer and paid leader in church youth ministry in Melbourne, before moving to Bendigo and embarking on careers in secondary school teaching, youth work and youth worker training. It was while training Christian youth workers for secular settings that he became interested in the faith-work

nexus. He is now a community worker at a local church, and a councillor in his local municipality.

*Brian Harris*

was for 17 years the principal of Vose Seminary, Perth, and is now Director of the AVENIR Leadership Institute (<https://avenirleadership.org/>). He is a Distinguished Visiting International Scholar of Spurgeon's College and the author of a number of books including *The Tortoise Usually Wins* (2013), *The Big Picture* (2015), and *When Faith Turns Ugly* (2016). Brian is on the Board of Directors of the Australian College of Theology and is the chair of its Academic Board.

*Marguerite Kappelhoff*

is the Executive Dean at the Sydney College of Divinity. Her qualifications are in social work, higher education and theology including a PhD in systematic theology from Charles Sturt University and St Marks National Theological Centre in Canberra. Her PhD "The Marks of the Church as 'Gift' and 'Task': A Paradigm for the Twenty-First Century Church", considers the transcendent and dynamic nature of the four creedal marks of the church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic and their relevance for ecumenical dialogue.

*Victoria Lorrimar*

is a Research Fellow in the School of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame Australia and Winifred Merritt Research Fellow with the Australian College of Theology. She completed her doctorate in theology at the University of Oxford, focusing on a theological anthropology for engaging questions around human technological enhancement. She is the author of *Human Technological Enhancement and Theological Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), as well as various articles in the areas of theology and science, ethics, and ecclesiology.

*Kara Martin*

has authored *Workshop: How to Use your Work to Worship God* (2017), and *Workshop 2: How to Flourish at Work* (2018), co-edited *Transforming Vocation: Connecting Theology, Church, and the Workplace for a Flourishing World* (2021), and co-authored *Keeping Faith: How Christian organisations can stay true to the way of Jesus* (2023). She lectures at Mary Andrews College and is an Adjunct Professor at Gordon–Conwell Theological Seminary. She has worked in media and communications, human resources, business analysis and policy development. Kara is also on the Board of Karam Fellowship and is researching how to effectively equip workplace Christians.

*W. Jay Moon*

(PhD intercultural studies, MBA, Professional Engineer) served thirteen years as a SIM missionary largely in Ghana, West Africa among the Builsa people focusing on church planting and water development. He is presently a Professor of Evangelism & Church Planting and the Director of the Office of Faith, Work, and Economics at Asbury Theological Seminary. He has edited five books and authored six books, most recently *Missional Vibrancy and Financial Viability: Alternate Financial Models for Churches and Church Plants When Tithes and Offerings are Not Enough*. His co-vocational roles include teaching pastor at an entrepreneurial church plant and small business owner.

*Nigel D. Pegram*

is a Senior Lecturer in Practical Theology at Alphacrucis University College, Australia. He lectures in ministry, biblical studies and social sciences for the College. His main research foci are sustainability in ministry and chaplaincy. His doctoral work examined the role of emotional intelligence in the prevention of burnout among Christian ministers. He is currently lead researcher in a five-year joint research project into chaplaincy in communities with entrenched disadvantage, funded by Mission Australia. He is an ordained minister of Churches of Christ in Australia and has had ministries in local churches and in state and national roles. Nigel's ongoing research explores the discussion around faith at work as part of the intersection of the mission of the Church and the theology of the priesthood of all believers.

*Gordon Preece*

has an MA, MSc.Soc. and PhD. Distinction (Fuller) on A Trinitarian Theology of Work. He is Founder-Director of Ethos: EA Centre for Christianity and Society and was Director of the University of Divinity Centre for Religion and Social Policy and is now a member of its Network and an Associate Researcher of Whitley College. Gordon has led Anglican churches in Sydney and Melbourne through workplace missional transition. Previously he lectured at Morling College, Sydney, was Director of the Centre for Applied Christian Ethics, Ridley College, and of Macquarie Christian Studies Institute, and Senior Policy Officer, Catholic Social Services Victoria. Gordon is a member of the Lausanne Workplace Network and the international Theology of Work Project's Editorial Board. He is author/editor of 13 books and *Zadok Perspectives and Papers*.

*Robyn Reynolds*

OLSH was a Senior Lecturer at Yarra Theological Union (University of Divinity, Melbourne) and lectured also at Melbourne's Heart of Life Centre for Spiritual and Pastoral Formation. Robyn's doctoral thesis explored Sacrament and Sacred Ritual in the context of Catholic and Indigenous Australian encounter. Before

moving to Melbourne, Robyn spent ten years as Dean at Nungalinya College in Darwin, following many years living and working in remote Aboriginal communities in northern and central Australia.

*Andrew Sloane*

is Lecturer in Old Testament and Christian Thought at Morling College, where he has been teaching since 2002. He teaches in the areas of integration of faith and work, OT exegesis and interpretation, philosophy of religion, and bioethics. Andrew qualified in medicine and practiced briefly as a doctor before going into Baptist ministry. Prior to moving to Morling, he taught at Ridley College in Melbourne (1996–2002). Andrew's publications include *Vulnerability and Care* (2016) and *At Home in a Strange Land* (2008). Andrew's current research focuses on theology of medicine, cognitive disability, the integration of faith and work and philosophical theology.

*Steve Taylor*

is Director, Angel Wings Ltd, Lead Researcher Te Pae Tawhiti 2040 and Senior Lecturer, Flinders University, Australia. Born in PNG, Steve worked as an orchardist in New Zealand, before training for ordination. He completed his doctorate in practical theology at the University of Otago in 2004, focusing on emerging forms of church. He has been Principal, Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership and Uniting College for Leadership and Theology and authored *First Expressions* (2019), *Built for Change* (2016), and *The Out of Bounds Church?* (2005), along with over 40 published peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.

*Lawrence Ward*

is the senior pastor of Abundant Life Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA). He holds a Master of Education from the University of Massachusetts, Boston and a Master in Religion in Workplace Theology/Ethics in Leadership from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS). He co-taught a course on Entrepreneurship in Church and Community at GCTS, Boston Campus and assisted in coaching forty business start-ups with Dr. David W. Gill. As a practitioner he co-founded Thrive and Growth Boston (USA), a gathering of Christian entrepreneurs. He has participated in Faith and Work Summits as a main and plenary speaker, workshop speaker, and steering team member. He served as a host for the Karam Forums.

*Nigel Wright*

is a Chartered Accountant, and Member of the Institute of Directors. He is an Ordained Minister in the Church of England and has a Master of Theology with a particular focus on faith and work. Having spent two decades in

the corporate world as a business leader, including CFO of a global trading communications consultants, he is passionate about theological and mission-al engagement in the workplace. Currently an incumbent (lead minister) of St Edmund's Church, Leeds, UK. Nigel has created and hosted numerous faith and work, and practical theology workshops, courses, and study days. Nigel is an International Association for Mission Studies Member, with ongoing research utilising the disciplines of liturgical, mission-al and practical theology, focusing on primary and secondary theology in relation to faith and work.

*Siu Fung Wu*

was a factory worker, IT professional, ordained minister, and global education officer before completing his PhD. He has had substantial involvement with leaders from Burmese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian backgrounds, both as a pastor and as a lecturer. He was Lecturer in New Testament Studies at Whitley College, University of Divinity, Australia, and has been an adjunct lecturer at various theological colleges since 2001. He is currently an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Divinity. Siu Fung is the author of *Suffering in Romans* (2015) and editor of the multi-authored volume *Suffering in Paul* (2019). He has also written academic articles on Pauline Studies and mission. His research focuses on the interface between the Bible, intercultural studies, and poverty. His research integrates his experience as a factory worker in Asia with his work in the humanitarian sector and his ongoing reflection as a biblical scholar.

*Xiaoli Yang*

is a researcher and adjunct at University of Divinity and Charles Sturt University, and has had visiting appointments at Fuller Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary and Boston University. She was President of Australian Association of Mission Studies 2022–23 and convenes the World Christianity and Missiology at the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Studies. Following a professional accounting career, she has been involved in pastoral leadership, theological education and spiritual direction locally and abroad over the last twenty years. Her recent publications include her PhD monograph *A Dialogue between Haizi's Poetry and the Gospel of Luke—Chinese Homecoming and the Relationship with Jesus Christ* (Brill, 2018; CYCU, 2022 in Chinese) and co-editing the special edition on “Chinese Christian Identities in a Wounded World” for *Mission Studies* (Brill, 2022). She has authored 50 journal articles and book chapters, as well as numerous poems for spiritual renewal. She is also fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and several other dialects.

# Introduction

*Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff*

The movement ... to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God, ordained as well as non-ordained, is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the world today.

—BOSCH, *Transforming Mission*, 478



## 1 Work in a Disrupted Age

Three decades ago, in 1991, David Bosch authored *Transforming Mission*.<sup>1</sup> His call for paradigm shifts in theologies of mission including the ministry of the whole people of God, sent into the world. In emphasising the sentness of the whole people of God, Bosch radically re-orientated, transformed even, the Monday to Friday spheres of work and leisure. Restaurants, offices and factories are mission-fields, the locations in which the whole people of God participate in God's transforming love.

Three decades later, the world of work has undergone significant further transformation. Changing relationship patterns and gender roles, automated industry, revolutions in computing, the mushrooming of the internet, digital communication and the emergence of robotics and Artificial Intelligence have disrupted the workplace. Many traditional job roles are now redundant. Many new jobs have been created. The tasks within almost all jobs are changing with technological advancements.<sup>2</sup> We have only just begun to see the potential

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1 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991])

2 Business Council of Australia, "How Jobs Will Change: Will Technology Destroy Jobs?" [https://www.workingforthefuture.com.au/how\\_jobs\\_will\\_change](https://www.workingforthefuture.com.au/how_jobs_will_change). Accessed 4 Sep 2022; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Future of work and skills," Paper presented at the 2nd Meeting of the G20 Employment Working Group, Hamburg, Germany (15–17 February 2017), [https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/wcms\\_556984.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/wcms_556984.pdf). Accessed 4 Sep 2022.

(and potentially the danger) of Artificial Intelligence and its effect on work. Social media platforms analyse patterns of usage, treating humans as consumers. New workplace technologies invite different practices, including mobility, connectivity and personalized behaviours.<sup>3</sup> Many people welcome these and other trends. Others are cautiously concerned or downright opposed. What will the future bring?

There is a growing global interest in how to equip Christians for integrating their faith with their work and applying faith and ethical perspectives to the world of work and economics. There are growing networks of faith and work centres, churches and higher education providers, for example the Faith and Work movement, the Oikonomia Network, Karam Forum, Made to Flourish, Economic Wisdom Project, Theology of Work Project, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, Lausanne Market/Workplace Network and Business as Mission, Redeemer Faith and Work Centre and City to City, Ethos and Reventure. This volume builds on these conversations, generating missiological questions that require significant reflection, including: How can missiological principles and understanding *missio Dei* (the mission of God) inform our faith, work and economic conversations? What are the emerging justice issues in the world of work and in what ways can theology and mission perspectives inform the Church's response? How are local churches working at their best to equip the people of God for mission in everyday life including workplaces? How are theological education providers developing leaders who can integrate mission, faith, work and economics, and help others in these directions? How has 'faith-less' work emerged, and how might Christians offer ministries like chaplaincy amid the reality of suffering and injustice in everyday situations of work? How are technological revolutions influencing work? What are the implications of Artificial Intelligence innovations for work, unemployment and the increasing gap between the huge wealth of the super-rich and deep poverty of the majority of the world?

These are globally significant issues facing society and the church. Christians in years past have raised their voices about work issues, including the massive number of deaths in the early nineteenth century mining or railway construction, the 20th century occupational deaths in Bhopal, Bangladesh, and China, and oppressive work practices, long work hours and lack of safety

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3 Facebook Business, "Six Trends Shaping the Future of Work" (February 7, 2018), <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/six-trends-shaping-the-future-of-work>. Accessed 4 Sep 2022.



and sanitation.<sup>4</sup> But today's disrupted age is presenting justice, human rights, equality and quality of life issues that demand a response from the church and missiology. We need to understand historically, theologically and missiologically where we stand, what we confess, how we understand the issues and how best to respond—and where the church is responding at its best.

To define key terms, we firstly understand our engagement in mission as our human response to God's triune participation in the world, including creating, redeeming and sustaining. Mission is all that God is doing in the world to help bring the world back into line with God's dream for the world – this includes evangelism, compassionate care, social justice, and care for creation.

We understand the church as the whole people of God, uniquely commissioned to participate in this Divine work. *Missio ecclesiae* or the mission of the church thus cooperates with *missio Dei* as the prior mission of God.

We define work to include all the activities of daily life, paid and unpaid, which contributes to stewardship of God's creation and our communities. Work is thus a central domain of the Church in the world. Part of the challenge of work in today's global context, as well as the challenge of the church navigating its direction and cooperating with *missio Dei*, is that we live in times of disruptive change. Work is transforming and changing in many ways. How then do we intentionally foster a transforming of work in directions that are whole and life-giving for workers and our communities and world? And how do we foster transforming work, in the sense of work that is positively and helpfully transforming for the world?

Our *Transforming Work* project has three main conversation partners. Firstly, we sought to ground our conversation missiologically in dialogue with David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*. Secondly, we sought to broaden our conversation globally with the companion volume *Readings in World Mission* and specifically its readings on Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God. Thirdly, we structured the volume's contributions around themes that Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene identified in their discussion of "Laity" in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*.<sup>5</sup>

4 R. A. Hig, "Industrial Relations", in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, edited by David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 483–487.

5 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, "Laity", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 664 [658–664].

## 2 A Missiological Methodology: Transforming Paradigms?

Any discussion of mission fruitfully dialogues with David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*, which has been called an "indispensable classic" in the theology of mission.<sup>6</sup> Bosch surveys mission history and suggests distinct periods can be identified. Bosch argues that a paradigm shapes each period, providing an overall frame of reference, and a distinct way of understanding God, humans, and the world. Bosch clarifies this by arguing for a distinct Bible text that dominates each period. In the patristic Period, John 3.16 spoke of the love of God, seen in the sending of Jesus, which is extended by God's messengers. In the Middle Ages, Luke 14.23 directs the church to compel people to come in. In the Reformation, Romans 1.16 understands God's right-living as extending grace and mercy, not punishment. In the Enlightenment period, the Great Commission (Matt. 28.18–20) directs disciple-making to the ends of the earth.<sup>7</sup>

The language of paradigm has been challenged.<sup>8</sup> It will be challenged again in our conclusion. However, the concept of paradigm offers initial value because it opens space for missiological conversations. Bosch intuitively sensed the need for change. He suggested a new emerging ecumenical paradigm:

The transition from one paradigm to another is not abrupt ... This produces a kind of theological schizophrenia, which we just have to put up with while at the same time groping our way toward greater clarity ... The point is simply that the Christian church in general and the Christian mission in particular are today confronted with issues they have never even dreamt of and which are crying out for responses both relevant to the times and in harmony with the essence of Christian faith.<sup>9</sup>

Having looked back over historical paradigms, Bosch then looks forward, sketching the outline of an emerging mission paradigm. His proposal includes thirteen elements, one of which is titled "Mission as Ministry by the Whole people of God." This element is explored under three headings: The Evolution

6 Norman Thomas, "Foreword," in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK; Maryknoll NY: Orbis 1995), xv; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

7 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 166–67, 214, 241, 347–49.

8 E.g., Gerald J. Pillay, 'Text, Paradigms and Context: An Examination of David Bosch's Use of Paradigms in the Reading of Christian History', *Missionalia* 18, 1990), 113–123; Martin Sutherland, "Pine Trees and Paradigms: Rethinking Mission in the West", in *Mission without Christendom: Exploring the Site*, ed. Martin Sutherland (Auckland: Carey, 2000), 131–148.

9 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 192.

of Ordained Ministry, the Apostolate of the Laity and Forms of Ministry.<sup>10</sup> Lay people become the “operational basis from which the *missio Dei* proceeds”,<sup>11</sup> with a ministry offered not in gathered worship but in shops, villages, farms, cities, law offices, politics and recreation. This has implications for understandings of God, church, laity and the ordained. For Bosch, this is one of the most “dramatic shifts taking place in the church today” and a “transformation of profound proportions”.<sup>12</sup> Our allusion to the title of the book *Transforming Mission* underscores the importance of mission as ministry by the whole people of God in Bosch’s thinking. It is this language, urgent in tone, invitational in posture, that frames this volume.

However, reading Bosch thirty years on, raises important theological questions. It is somewhat uncomfortable to consider how much space is given in “Mission as Ministry by the Whole people of God” to the place of the ordained. The section begins with “the monopoly of the ordained”, then turns to the “clericalizing of the church”, and ends with consideration of the futures of ordained ministry, asserting “nothing will be gained by abolishing it”.<sup>13</sup> Why, if the emerging paradigm is Ministry by the Whole people of God, are the ordained so central to Bosch’s argument?

A first task of this volume is to examine the missiological implications when the actual grassroots mission of God’s people was a primary dialogue partner, rather than the ordained. We find Bosch’s vision of a “more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God”<sup>14</sup> is specific enough, yet bold enough, to require disciplined grassroots reflection. We wish to interrogate how a re-worked missiology of the *laos* might be constructed. Notions of professionalism and contemporary trends in chaplaincy, for example, invite a constructive re-working of ministry by God’s people as they illuminate the disciplines needed in contemporary ministry and a different cultural environment. This provides a different starting point to the ordained paradigm that shaped Bosch’s argument.

A second task of this volume, thirty years after the publication of *Transforming Mission*, is to examine Bosch’s bold claims for a dramatic shift and probe the nature of Bosch’s transforming vision for the whole people of God in the whole of their working lives. We also take seriously Bosch’s appeal to transform our approach to mission and to adopt an approach to mission that is

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10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478–85.

11 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 483.

12 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478, 481.

13 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478, 479, 485.

14 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

transforming. The philosopher Thomas Kuhn argued that ‘paradigm’ refers to a particular way we look at the world. Hence Bosch’s thirteen ‘contemporary’ paradigms are in fact paradigms from a particular perspective, shaped by his particular Protestant understandings of mission and from a particular time.<sup>15</sup> They are ‘last century’. Reading Bosch three decades later offers readings that are post-Apartheid, post-the Berlin Wall and post-9/11. Each of these ‘posts’ has changed the ministry of the people of God, as has the digital world with social media, artificial intelligence and experiences of COVID-19. How, in this time and place, might we conceive, or re-conceive, a paradigm of Ministry by the Whole People of God? And how we might do so in a way that is inclusive enough to embody the broad denominational perspectives that exists?

A third task of this volume is to examine mission and work, or work with missiological perspectives. As Bosch asserted, theology of the laity does not mean training them to be “mini-pastors” but equipping them to serve contingent on the challenges they find in their cities, homes, classrooms, farms, shops and politics.<sup>16</sup> The majority of believers spend the majority of their time in contexts outside of church buildings and gathered worship. God called Adam in Genesis 2 to tasks of tending and caring for the whole of creation. God is imagined in Scripture as a worker, including labour as a musician, composer, potter, metalworker, garment maker, dresser, architect and a builder.<sup>17</sup> The mission of Jesus recognised disciples in their contexts of work. Fishermen and tax collectors were called not while attending the synagogue, but from their daily life on fishing boats and sitting at tax-collecting booths. Some of those called found themselves building a church through attention to Scripture and prayer. However many were instructed by Jesus to remain in their villages. Among their networks in the midst of daily life, they were called to share love with neighbours and establish justice in their business dealings. Those in marketplace vocations play key roles in the mission of the book of Acts. Note the key role of the house of Simon the Tanner, the craft of Dorcas, the business networks of Lydia. Paul relied on tentmaking skills and understood the Gospel in dynamic dialogue with marketplace and business practises.<sup>18</sup> Given these Biblical trajectories, it is no wonder that Syriac Christian writers used the word merchant as a metaphor for those who spread the gospel. One of their early

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15 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 187ff.

16 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 484.

17 Robert Banks, *God the Worker: Journeys into the Mind, Heart and Imagination of God* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1994).

18 See for example Paul’s use of temple imagery in 1 Corinthians 3:16, which foreshadows the social and economic considerations of food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8.

hymns celebrate the ministry of the whole people of God as it connects to marketplace and workplace:

*Travel well girt like merchants,  
That we may gain the world.  
Convert men to me,  
Fill creation with teaching.*<sup>19</sup>

In this volume writers from diverse global contexts consider the “merchant-like” nature of God’s mission as it fills marketplaces, workplaces and the whole of daily life.

### 3 A Global Missiology Conversation

One way to initiate the task of reading 30 years ‘after’ Bsoch’s particular Protestant understandings of mission is provided by *Readings in World Mission*. This volume locates Bosch’s understandings of Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God as a global conversation with missiologists in Asia (M.M. Thomas, Rajaiah D. Paul, Daniel T. Niles, Virginia Fabella), Europe (Jürgen Moltmann, Elizabeth Behr-Sigel), South America (Leonardo Boff) and Africa (John de Gruchy). These writers offer a missiology located in the mission of Jesus, which reconfigures mission and ministry in all areas of society. *Readings in World Mission* serves as a companion volume to *Transforming Mission*. Published first in the United Kingdom (London: SPCK 1995), there is also an American edition (Maryknoll NY: Orbis 1995) though our authors rely on the original SPCK publication.<sup>20</sup> It contains longer source documents, a selection of readings along with a contextualizing introduction. Each of our authors were invited to engage not only with Bosch, but also with these global voices. As writers we engaged together with the extracts in Thomas’ *Readings in World Mission*, rather than going back to each of the original fuller documents and the contexts from which they are extracted, as that gave us a common source of the orchestra of voices to engage with. Bosch drew from a wide range of sources and not all are accessible online. Thus using *Readings in World Mission* had limits, as it relied on Thomas’s editorial work. Nevertheless it was one way for the volume to attend to global church. Interested readers may dig deeper

19 Richard C. Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 62.

20 Thomas, ed. *Readings in World Mission*, xv.

themselves and consider our contributions in the context of those wider contexts. By way of introduction, we provide a brief overview of these global voices.

From India, M. M. Thomas appealed after World War II for a radical laicism, asserting that “Christian religion ... and the Church consists *primarily* of [laypersons] doing their secular jobs and witnessing to the true life of the secular ‘hid with Christ in God.’”<sup>21</sup> The spiritual reign of God invades all spheres of society, and Thomas helpfully suggests that all so-called secular activity is part of God’s interest. Also from India, Rajaiah Paul argued that the laity do not exist to relieve ordained ministers of ministry within the church, but to work in their secular callings to foster the rule of God in God’s world. For Paul, the message of the gospel can be most effectively spread “by Christians who have been placed by God within those very systems and who have been called by [God] to exercise their Christian ministry as the *laos* in their own secular situations.”<sup>22</sup>

Hendrik Kraemer argued for a missiology of *diakonia*, in which an apostolate of the laity served in the whole of life.<sup>23</sup> As urged in *Lumen Gentium* in 1964 and *Apostolican Actuositatem* (which translates as the Apostolate of Lay People) in 1965, the church has a diversity of ministry and a unity of mission. While some are entrusted with teaching, sanctifying and governing, others, specifically “the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ ... In the concrete, their *apostale* is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification ... going about it in a way that bears clear witness to Christ.”<sup>24</sup> Mission is defined not by position, but by practices of participation.

Roman Catholic theology has increasingly recognised lay apostolate ministry. Most notably both Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII encouraged the laity to “participate in the hierarchical apostolate” given their role of not simply “belonging to the church”, but rather through “being the church”.<sup>25</sup> These

21 M. M. Thomas, “An Irrelevant Profession,” *Student World* 43 (1950), 319–21; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 245, [244–46].

22 Rajaiah D. Paul, “Towards a New Strategy in Asia: The Layman as the Spearhead of the Christian Enterprise,” *Student World* 49 (1956), 217–73, 275–76; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 247 [246–48].

23 Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 154; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), [248–49].

24 “Apostolican Actuositatem” (1965), Art 2, in VC2, 768, 773–75; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 251 [251–52].

25 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 663 [658–664].

statements served as foundational precursors to the many Vatican II documents which further develop the scope and reach of the lay apostolate. *Lumen Gentium*, for example, understands the laity to be the faithful and baptised people of God who in their “own way” share in the “priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ” carrying out “their own part” in the “mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world”. Their “secular” nature allows them to engage in “temporal affairs” having “secular professions and occupations” which centrally locates them into their God-called position and through which they can “work for sanctification of the world from within”. Thus, the laity as the “gathered ... People of God ... make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth”.<sup>26</sup> This invited a transforming of theological formation.

For Jürgen Moltmann, theology must not be limited to the religious sphere. He argued for a ‘political theology’ as the best meaningful expression to describe a wider theology of Christianity engaging the issues of the world:

Christian theology will in the future become more and more a practical and political theology. It will no longer be simply a theology for priests and pastors, but also a theology for the laity in their callings in the world. It will be directed not only toward divine service in the church, but also toward divine service in the everyday life of the world. Its practical implementation will include preaching and worship, pastoral duties, and Christian community, but also socialization, democratization, education toward self-reliance and political life.<sup>27</sup>

Transforming of work as mission and the lay apostolate cannot be separated from being the church. Hence *Readings in World Mission* offered as exemplars several case studies of lived ecclesial practice. Ministry of the whole people of God must have ecclesial implications, a koinonia as all, male and female, are called to the “charism of the priesthood” as persons who hear the word of God.<sup>28</sup> Virginia Fabella begins with an understanding that Jesus’ mission on

26 Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), no. 14, 23, 31, 33. Accessed 4 Sep 2022.

27 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 11–12; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 253 [252–54].

28 Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, “The Meaning of the Participation of Women in the Life of the Church,” in *Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church*. Geneva,



earth is shared by all people, lay and ordained seeking a society that “reflects God’s kingdom of love, truth, justice and peace.”<sup>29</sup> Base Christian Communities (Boff)<sup>30</sup> and the charismatic movement (de Gruchy),<sup>31</sup> are argued to be exemplars of this vision. This requires a missionary identity, in which, for D.T. Niles, “all are missionaries.”<sup>32</sup> These provide the first hints of how a grassroots missiology of work might challenge, invigorate, transform even, the mission of work.

So, while Bosch’s work is a positive integrating feature that is foundational to the structure of this project, when it comes to considering most fully the unique intersection of faith, work and mission it is appropriate to interrogate from as many angles as possible the concept of ‘mission as ministry by the whole people of God’ in order to capture the full range of kaleidoscopic and refracted images. Using the source documents in *Readings in World Mission* encourages attention to primary source documents and hermeneutical freedom. The choice of texts “not of First World missionaries but of indigenous Christians,”<sup>33</sup> ensures engagement with the global church and the diversity of theologies across the globe. This provides missiological dialogue with the richness of world Christianity that is attentive to the unique challenges of mission and faith in contemporary contexts.

#### 4 An Ecumenical Conversation of Mission as the Church in the World

After *Transforming Mission* and *Readings in World Mission*, a third conversation partner or framework for the book’s structure is Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene’s discussion of “Laity” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*.

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Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1977, 26–28; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 255 [254–55].

29 Virginia Fabella, “Mission of Women in the Church in Asia: Role and Position,” in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, edited by John S. Pobee and Barbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 82–84, 89; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 257 [256–58].

30 Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 1986, 32–33; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995) 258 [258–59].

31 John de Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis: A South African Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 25, 30, 76; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 259–60.

32 D. T. Niles, *Upon the Earth*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 10–11; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 249 [249–50].

33 Thomas, ed. *Readings in World Mission*, xv.



They provide an overview of the re-discovery of the laity, with particular reference to ecumenical movements and the World Council of Churches. They demonstrate the problems that arise as the Church in the world seeks to define the laity as “unordained,” given the inference of a “lack of training or competence” which further undermines the foundational conception of a ministry of the laity.<sup>34</sup> Adler and Katoneene note attempts towards correction have emerged in Protestant and Roman Catholic theology particularly through the revisions or “re-discovery” made in the ecumenical and renewal movements.<sup>35</sup> They observe with commendation that this same correction has not been required in the Orthodox tradition which understands all baptised church members (ordained or laity) to equally participate in the ministry of the Body of Christ specifically through the sacrament of chrismation.<sup>36</sup> Adler and Katoneene suggest that any discussions concerning the lay apostolate being recognised as ‘God’s action in the world’ require a ‘re-defined ecclesiology’.<sup>37</sup> They conclude with a re-defined and ecumenical ecclesiology that incorporates new theological insights in four concepts: ‘ministry of the laity’, ‘church -gathered and dispersed’, ‘function of the ordained ministry’ and ‘Christ in the world’.

We use these four themes to order our work, while making three significant modifications. First, we reorder the themes ‘chronologically’ from a systematic theological positioning: (a) Christ in the world, (b) Church and world; (c) ministry of laity, (d) ordained ministry, and (e) maturation. This modification is intended to honour the primacy of the agency of God in mission. It rightly orders the ministry of the whole people of God as an expression of the church in the world and ordained ministry as serving the mission of all of God’s people. Second, we work with “church and world” rather than “Church – gathered and dispersed.” This modification makes sense of the ways technology is changing patterns of work as well as the innovative approaches to church planting discussed in several chapters. Third, we argue for a fifth theme, that of ‘maturation’. As we will demonstrate, maturation holds together several our chapters. It also resonates with several threads present in *Readings in World Mission*. We demonstrate various ways in which maturation can throw fresh and important theological lens on the contemporary challenges to the nature of work, including artificial intelligence.

In this volume, these five themes – Christ in world, Church and world, ministry of laity, ordained ministry and maturation – enable a systematic

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34 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 659.

35 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 639ff.

36 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 662.

37 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 658.

interrogation of the interplays and complexities at play when work is brought into conversation with the ministry of the whole people. We provide introductory comments at the start of each section that further explain these five themes and how the chapters of that section engage these themes and offer a contemporary missiology of work. The result is a unique volume as contributors update, ground and interrogate their missiology of work in conversation with these three significant sources of missiology.

The chapters in this volume reveal that *missio Dei* is flourishing (as indeed it would, being sustained and maintained from its Source) but always remains as an invitation to the whole people of God to participate in being sent. As the sacred/secular is challenged, what will emerge is not so much a transforming of paradigms as the transforming of liminalities. Transformation results from the attention paid to God's activity in all of spheres of life, among all of God's missionary people.

In various ways, these chapters outline the need for formation and equipping so that Christians can be skilled and prepared for the contours of global and local mission. This requires a transforming of work as mission and a re-imagining of current models of training and engagement through congregations and theological institutions. The goal is that the people of God are equipped to cooperate in the *missio Dei*. That cooperation is expressed locally and globally, in current contexts and horizons yet seen, all the time engaging, even in our waiting and in prophetically anticipating transformation as we are led by God's Spirit.

This edited volume brings together diverse voices seeking to integrate faith, work and mission in a postmodern, religiously pluralistic context. The kaleidoscope of chapters offers fresh ways of engaging new patterns of mission and vocational engagement, all working with the challenge of *missio Dei* lived in relation to transforming work. The triune God, the One who dances in all of life, is presented as faithful, refusing to be known only in this way or that (for example in Church, on Sunday, or through the priestly ordained). Jesus, with us to the ends of the earth, becomes understood as all places where humans work and play. The Spirit's work is recognized and glorified in all aspects of daily life and living, forever seeking and creating relationship where it has not previously existed, bringing light, love, restoration and calling all to join in the perichoretic dance of the Eternal one.

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**PART 1**

*Christ in the World*





# Introduction to Part 1

The first theme, in our re-ordering, is Christ in the world – For God so loved the world (John 3:16), that the light of Christ came shining (John 1:1–5). These Johanine affirmations order mission as a response to a God of love, actively engaged in the world. This theological theme results in a work-orientated spirituality of mission and the invitation to attend to the movements of God in all of daily life. All spheres of life, marketplace and workplace are places receiving the love of Christ. The nature of love is that it seeks the good of another. Hence the movements of Christ in the world respond to structures and actions in the world that diminish all those who bear God's image. To participate with Christ in the world requires discernment and the need to speak and act prophetically in response to loveless acts and attitudes.

The theme of Christ in the world draws on several elements of Bosch's emerging paradigm, including Mission as *missio Dei* and Mission as Theology.<sup>1</sup> The theme of Christ in the world is a fourth and final (of four) area of theological insight proposed by Adler and Katoneene. In our volume we choose, unlike Adler and Katoneene, not to end but to begin with Christ in the world. We make this move in order to centre mission in the sending activity of God and work as a participation in the *missio Dei*.

Several of our authors examine Christ in the world, yet using theological methodologies and lived experiences quite different from those present in *Transforming Mission* and *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*.

Xiaoli Yang highlights that despite the 'explosive growth' of Christianity in the 21st century within the Global East/South, these voices bearing truth and wisdom of *missio Dei* are too often, and unfortunately, not heard by the global church. Drawing from the methodologies of 'lived theology' and 'grassroots theology', this chapter listens to the embodied experiences of ordinary grassroots Christians in the streets of East Asia through two case studies. The goal is to provide a trajectory towards a grassroots missiology that may be discerned and brought into global conversations for the sake of mutual enrichment. Yang sets these case studies and learnings in position with Bosch's *Transforming Mission* and discusses mission as inculturation, liberation and ministry for the whole people of God. The gift of this chapter to the volume and to the wider Church cannot be understated, providing as it does an opportunity to learn from the reality of life in churches from non-western contexts.

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1 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 20th Anniversary edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011). 398–402, 501–510.

The next two chapters offer insightful readings of Scripture as resources for workplace theology and witness. The results of these reflections are new ways of understanding mission as work, located in lived experiences, particularly emerging from the urban contexts of Asia.

Siu Fung Wu draws from Galatians and Romans, exploring how Paul integrated faith and work(s) for God's purpose of transforming humanity and renewing creation. Wu highlights that Paul envisions a Spirit-indwelt alternative community which embodies Christ's self-giving cross-shaped love in a world of chaos. The Pauline church was to reflect God's glory as Spirit-filled image-bearers in an empire characterized by oppression and violence, backed by an economy supported by massive slavery. This is significantly illustrative of how the church collectively as a community and individually in the believer's life and work may participate in God's kingdom in the face of global poverty. As an *image-bearing* community who are *representing Christ*, God's people embody 'Christ in the world.' Wu reminds us that work is critically important for the poor, both for their dignity and their wellbeing, and that we also need to be critically aware of power issues that exist. Part of the value of Wu's chapter is that it focuses on the context of poverty in Asia and broadens the book's missiological conversation with Bosch to welcome the voices of leading Asian community development practitioners Jayakumar Christian and Melba Padilla Maggay who see transforming mission as including the restoration or recognition of the image of God in people and anticipating the transformation of whole communities.

Sarah Do addresses the theme of work in Philippians and explores how Paul's missionary enterprise includes an understanding that the faithful-work praxis of the Philippians serves as indispensable in fulfilling the *missio Dei*. She extrapolates from Paul's missional enterprise a connection between the vocational location of a missional community and how that specifically resonates to migrant churches. Do is able to draw on her experience and others as first- and second-generation Vietnamese migrants in Australia, Canada and Taiwan. In doing so she recognizes that the history of migration and assimilation, including its cultural and language differences across generations offers a unique perspective as it relates to both mission and transforming work. She concludes that Paul's missiology provides a frame for considering a contemporary transforming of work that may be shared across all generations even as second and subsequent generations continue to discern the gospel, mission and service in the context of their callings in the world.

Dave Benson and Darren Cronshaw offer another example of Christ in the world as missional engagement in the marketplace considering specifically the role of faith-based social service agencies. They suggest that in the social



services sector with its deregulation and increasing competitiveness, Christian faith-based organizations and workers can conceptualize their work as a competitive striving together for shalom. While many in the sector question what it means for agencies competing against each other, this chapter suggests competition can be constructive and positively contribute to best serving those in need, just as it can be positive in sport and not necessarily antagonistic. We need the best of the Church's thinking, as well as the most diligent praxis, engaging with these and other diverse kinds of faith and work integration in so-called 'secular' marketplace and social service contexts. In categories of mission described by Bosch, Benson and Cronshaw adopt a posture of mission as incarnation, church-with-others, quest for justice and contextualization; all as part of a new paradigm that confidently yet humbly embraces the world of social service work as mission.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 377, 410, 430, 458; cf. Willem Saaymen and Klippies Kritzinger, eds. *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

# Towards a Grassroots Missiology: Case Studies of *Missio Dei* in the Streets of East Asia

*Xiaoli Yang*

## Abstract

The twenty-first century is characterized by the explosive growth of Christianity in the global East/South beyond/outside of Christendom. This contemporary reality affirms what Bosch declared thirty years ago, “Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate.”<sup>1</sup> However, the voices of *missio Dei* in East Asia, both narratives and missiologies, are too often not heard by the global church. Drawing from the methodologies of ‘lived theology’ and ‘grassroots theology’, this chapter listens to the embodied experiences of ordinary grassroots Christians in the streets of East Asia through two case studies. It is followed by conversations with Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* in terms of mission as inculturation, liberation and ministry for the whole people of God. In doing so, a trajectory towards a grassroots missiology may be discerned and brought into global conversations for the sake of mutual enrichment.

## Keywords

Grassroots – workplace – mission – *missio Dei* – heaven – meals – laity

## 1 Introduction

In the last few decades, western scholars have explored from various perspectives how to establish theological frameworks by moving away from abstract beliefs and elite/academic exemplars to the practices and settings of everyday people, for example, the projects of ‘lived theology’, ‘everyday theology’,

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<sup>1</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 402.

‘grounded theology’ or ‘biography as theology’.<sup>2</sup> Scholars of the Global East/South prefer this form of bottom-up construction in that the lived experiences of everyday life take priority as sources of theology of mission. This is because Christian mission takes place, not out of church strategies, schemes and management, but in and through “the spontaneous and accidental result of pre-existing daily social relationships”.<sup>3</sup>

This provides a method and a purpose for this chapter, in which the practices of everyday Christians in the streets of Asia provide theological reflection and challenge Christendom’s mission ways. Everyday ministry by East Asian grassroots Christians, a form of ‘lived theology’, is an expression of the majority of Christian faith. Grassroots theology is defined, according to Simon Chan, as a ‘vibrant, albeit implicit, theology’, drawing from everyday experiences of believers founded in faith and prayers.<sup>4</sup> From a Pentecostal perspective, Mark Cartledge speaks in a similar vein that the ordinary expressions of grassroots believers in their praxis can be used to develop ordinary theology. Therefore, testimony can be a legitimate form of theological discourse.<sup>5</sup> As the lived, ordinary and grassroots theology engages with *missio Dei*, a trajectory of grassroots missiology that participates with and witnesses the triune God from the bottom up may be discerned. This demands that narrative and theology are not treated as segregated parts but are entwined.

Although the notions of ‘mission’, ‘missiology’ and *missio Dei* have been challenged by western missiologists from both post-colonial and post-Christendom perspectives, this chapter insists on the use of these terms, in order to invite fresh perspectives from the stories at the grassroots of the Global East, as well as to affirm the positive aspects of the historical mission enterprise of Christendom. Mission is defined here as that part of the Christian response to the gospel of Jesus Christ grounded in who God is and what God is doing in the world.

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2 Charles Marsh, Peter Slade, and Sarah Azaransky, *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, Cultural Exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); Justin Tse, “Grounded Theologies: ‘Religion’ and the ‘Secular’ in Human Geography,” *Progress in Human Geography* 18(2) (2013); James Wm McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories can Remake Today’s Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

3 Gotthard Oblan, “Pentecostal by Default? Contemporary Christianity in China,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 338.

4 Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 9.

5 Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony: Its Importance, Place and Potential* (Cambridge: Grove, 2002).

This chapter surveys case studies of a transformed kidnapper barber Meng Jia in Mainland China and a master chef Li Tang in Hong Kong. The two businessmen share the common characteristics of being ‘grassroots’—ordinary people living out their faith in the streets of East Asia. Through literature reviews and a series of oral interviews and participant observations, this chapter listens perceptively to their narratives and mission practices. It is followed by a reflection on mission as ministry to the whole people of God, in dialogue with David Bosch and Adler and Katoneene, regarding a possible locus of a grassroots missiology. As both an insider and outsider, I seek to offer a dialogue between embodied practice and missiological reflection so that both a grassroots missiology and Bosch’s missiological framework will be enriched, renewed and challenged.

Now we turn to the narratives and mission practices of the two cases.

## 2 Case I: a Transformed and Transformative Barber: from a Kidnapper to a Missional Leader

Meng Jia, in his thirties, had a striking hairstyle and smiles across his face during an interview in a barber shop in the street of a metropolitan city of China. Meng shared how he was transformed from being a kidnapper to a missional leader. As he cut my hair and shared his testimony, the words from Luke 12.7 rang out the truth: “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” The yearning to be accepted, loved, affirmed and treasured is in every human being made in the image of God (*imago Dei*). Meng’s narrative speaks loudly that this yearning can only be fulfilled when one encounters God.

Meng was born into an atheist family in a northern part of the country. He had never heard of Jesus before. All his education was atheistic, and he believed in superstition due to the influence of folk religions in his hometown. As he grew up, he found no hope in life. He got involved with the wrong people by robbing and kidnapping people for money. Even the police were afraid of him. When he was fourteen years old, he planned to kidnap an official’s son. However, this plan was thwarted when his friend and accomplice got caught and spent two years in a labour camp. Meng eventually did get caught for another crime and spent some time in prison. Life was meaningless for him. When he had money, he wanted to rob more, as if he entered into a bottomless hole. In the end he did not care if he died or not. Even his own mother told the police to give him as much punishment as necessary because he was totally out of control. He had brought much shame to the entire family.

After prison, someone gave him a booklet entitled 'Hope for Modern Man'—a revised version of gospel stories, that aroused his curiosity. Even so, when he came to a coastal city in search of a better life over twenty years ago, he carried two guns ready to rob a bank. He thought by doing such a 'big job' he would be free from working once for all.

While Meng waited to carry out his grand plan, he worked in a barber shop as a hairdresser. One day, one of his customers, a Christian businessman, shared the gospel with him while he cut his hair. He was curious to learn more, and within six months he became a Christian. All his shame was lifted and he could walk with his head held high. Since then, he has been able to buy his own hairdressing shop. Every person who comes into his shop can hear the gospel when their hair is being cut. Barber shops have become his mission field—his professed faith has moved into action. He says, "Before I knew Jesus, nothing could make me happy. Now I am full of joy because I know God loves me". As he shared, his face lit up.

Meng met his wife when they were sixteen years old and got married when they were twenty-six years old. Their marriage was transformed as they shared faith, read the Scripture and joined a church community together.

His story, like many stories, is one of an ongoing transformative process. Meng has come a long way from being a kidnapper to a missional leader by the grace of God, and He who began a good work will bring it to completion (Philippians 1.6).

Because of his own conversion experience, during a haircut Meng naturally leads customers into gospel conversations when he is at work. Being out of a natural flow, his clients do not resent this, instead, they are keen to talk with him. During the short or long hours of hairdressing, they open their hearts to him and share their life struggles with him. These clients become regular visitors to his shop. As a result, the barber business has prospered and he has become well-known, earning the highest hairdressing salary in the city. As Meng has sought to bless others, God has blessed his business—barber shops have multiplied and became a franchise in a number of locations in the country. Meng shared, "it is not so much my own skills, but the blessings of God".

Outside each of Meng's shops there stand two pillars. The Chinese Beatitudes are engraved on each of the four sides. The shop is called 'Heavenly Blessed Shop' (*Tianzhulang*, 天祝廊), and Chinese customers can easily interpret from this that the owner prays to 'Heaven' (*Tian*, 天), a Confucian concept of a transcendental being, to bless him with business prosperity. The truth is that Meng prays for every guest who walks into his shop to have the blessings from hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While Meng seeks to grow as a Christian in church settings, he has attempted to create a Christian business culture in these shops while learning about marketplace mission from Business Fellowship. Some well-known sayings and proverbs from the Bible are placed on the walls, so clients have opportunities to read them while being served. Once a moody woman came to the shop with her child. As she sat down ready to have a haircut, she saw the translated shortened quotation by Martin Luther on the wall: "When a mother [father goes ahead and] washes diapers [or performs some other mean task for his child] God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling. ..." <sup>6</sup> Luther's great contributions to the sanctification of the ordinary became the key that unlocked her heart. She spent the rest of the time pouring out her heart to the barber serving her. Later, she placed her trust in God and became a Christian. Her circumstance did not change, but she did. She learnt how to yield her depression and anxiety to God, the Lord of her life.

Given a vision of multiplying disciples through missional barber shops, Meng decided to train more young people to learn hairdressing skills while studying the truth in the Bible. Some young people from ethnic minority groups in poor rural areas were recruited to his shops. They found not only a way of survival in the wave of urbanization, but also grew spiritually in these missional shops. Pastors in local churches have joined the team to help shepherd these missional barbers. They meet for prayer and worship in the morning and Bible studies during the lunch break. These missional shops have become not only a mission field, but also a training ground for missional leaders to multiply shops/disciples.

Today Meng seeks to expand his business to other areas, while growing as a missional leader in partnership with Business Fellowship. Like the younger brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11–32), he has returned home and is joyfully receiving the forgiveness and redemption offered to him. Meng is still learning business ethics and practice as he leaves his past behind. This journey is demonstrating that salvation and redemption are out of the grace of God alone (cf. Ephesians 2.9).

Now we turn to another grassroots figure, a master chef who follows the 'Master Chef'.

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6 Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (Excerpt), edited by Walther I. Brandt, vol. 45, Luther's Works (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 1962): The English translation is: "... when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child ... God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith."

### 3 Case II: a Gourmet Chef: from Kitchen to Pulpit

Locals in the city of Hong Kong would have heard of the name 'king of deer' or 'king of razor fish' from TV shows. The gourmet chef, Li Tang, is well-known in Hong Kong and overseas for his specialities and professionalism in the food industry. He makes exquisite Chinese dishes out of deer meat imported from Australia and England or razor fish from Scotland. These exotic meals have become favourite meals for locals. As a result, Li has won a number of food competitions in Hong Kong and has become a master chef.

Li came from a mechanical engineering background in the 1960s in Hong Kong. In order to earn more money, he decided to start his own restaurant and make 'snake soup' (*shegeng*, 蛇羹), an exquisite menu for Cantonese eaters, as his speciality. This was why he was first given the name 'king of snakes' when he became successful. He even married someone who was willing to help him start the business from nothing. Like many superstitious businessmen in Hong Kong seeking business prosperity, Li was involved in all kinds of activities such as the occult, witchcraft, palm reading, fengshui, fortune telling, idol worship and conversion to Buddhism. Still he felt empty inside.

During the SARS epidemic in 2003, his business was about to fall apart as it involved wildlife. He was depressed and his marriage was struggling. However, a crisis can bring opportunities as shown in the Chinese word 'crisis' (*weiji*, 危机) which is made up of two words: risk and opportunity. A regular client to the restaurant, a Christian friend, persuaded him to go to church. Li pushed it aside a few times but later out of 'face-saving', visited a church for the first time with the friend. During the service, every word by the preacher felt like it was spoken to him directly: they exposed all the bad deeds he had committed in the past. Tears streamed down silently and he decided to put his trust in God. His life and business were turned around following this encounter.

Following his conversion, a Christian marketplace ministry played a key role in empowering Li Tang and his business, providing coaching and practical help. He also won the prestigious Food Contest prize of the Hong Kong Government and Tourism Development Bureau for three consecutive years. He holds a thanksgiving celebration on the anniversary of his date of conversion, entertaining those who supported him on his 'refaithing' journey.

Today, master chef Li keeps learning the art of cooking in his kitchen from the 'Master Chef' Jesus Christ. He goes to hospitals, churches, businesses and factories to share his testimony and the way of blessing found in God. He has also travelled abroad and has spoken on 'Missional Kitchens' in China or 'Master Li's Shows' in New Zealand. He has indeed become a different kind of master chef who preaches the gospel message to people from all walks of life.

Like many biblical figures, such as Abraham, Jacob and Peter who were given new names after their encounters with God, Li, after his conversion, has also given his signature dishes biblical names. These artistic creations are combined with biblical themes. Many have won cooking prizes and been featured on TV shows. One of the dishes is called 'Peter's Chicken Dip' (*Bide Jinji*, 彼得浸鸡). With his unique way of preparation, from choosing the type of chicken to the dipping technique, Li hopes his customers will not only enjoy the special taste of chicken dip, but also recall how the cock's crow helped Peter to repent from his denial of Jesus three times (Mark 14.66–72). Li thinks that the cock-crows symbolize the arrival of the new dawn every day. Likewise, they reminded Peter of Jesus' prophetic words (Matthew 26.34; Mark 14.30; Luke 22.34; John 13.38) that caused him to break down and weep (Matthew 26.75; Mark 14.72; Luke 22.62; John 18.37), thus signifying the arrival of a new era in which Peter was able to rise up and build the early church (Luke 22.32). Li shared how his impulsive temperament, similar to Peter's, lacked self-awareness of human frailty. He was once a proud man making promises that he could not fulfill. The Lord disciplined and humbled him, just as the cock's crow woke Peter up from continued falling. He says:

I deeply understand the lessons from the story of 'the three cock-crows'. In the beginning, I denied, challenged, swore, resisted and rejected the Lord, showing all kinds of arrogant and stubborn behaviours. When my 30-year-old business faced bankruptcy, I was desperate. Jesus broke into my life and business, forgiving my sins, accepting me as his disciple and working miracles.<sup>7</sup>

His unique dish 'Peter's Chicken Dip' was featured on a Hong Kong TV show where Li Tang was called a 'kitchen god'. There he testified to God's grace in his life.

Another prize-winning dish, 'Deer Tendons with Ginger Vinegar' (*Lujin Jiangcu*, 鹿筋姜醋) was inspired by another traditional dish 'Pig Legs with Ginger Vinegar'. In Chinese tradition, a dish made of pig legs is used to provide nutrition for mothers who have just given birth. Li Tang borrowed this tradition and creatively replaced pig legs with deer tendons, which he first imported from overseas. Chinese medicine believes that deer tendons heal brittle bones and chronic rheumatic joints, that ginger warms the body, and that vinegar

7 Li Tang, 李棠, "Zuo Zhu Mentu zai Chufang—Wo zai Zhichang Chengzhang he Shifeng de Jingli, 作主门徒在厨房—我在职场成长和事奉的经历," *Discipleship in Kitchen—My Experience of Growth and Ministry in Marketplace*, *Mission and Marketplace*, 2012, 5.



appetizes and detoxifies.<sup>8</sup> In order to remember his spiritual birth, Li set up banquet meals and made this special dish for his pastors and brothers and sisters on the anniversary of his baptism. Like a priest in the kitchen, he was guided by the Lord to make this dish as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, pioneering a creative work in the Christian kitchen business. Later, in consultation with a pastor, he changed the name to 'Vinegar of the Cross in Victory' (*Shijia Gongcheng Cu*, 十架功成醋). The pastor, learning from Li Tang, studied in detail the Scripture where vinegar was given to Jesus on the cross twice (Matthew 27:34, 48; Mark 15:36). The first time Jesus refused to drink in order to identify with sinners (Heb. 2:9), and the second time he drank just before his last cry of dereliction to complete his mission on earth. This special dish thus invites restaurant clients to meditate on the work of the cross at the meal table. The dish expresses Li Tang's mission and spirituality as a disciple of Jesus.

Similarly, Li has made other exquisite dishes of traditional Chinese ingredients that carry biblical significance, such as 'Moses' Snake Soup' (*Moxi Shegeng*, 摩西蛇羹) and three versions of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish' (*Wubin Eryu*, 五饼二鱼). With many prayers in the kitchen, he found "brother Jesus told me where to insert the ingredients ... God the Father showed me what to do next". This communion is the foundation of his gourmet dishes. As a result, he has created a full menu called 'Disciples' Dinner Banquet' as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to testify to the grace of God in life and work. Beyond the meal table, these dishes demonstrate one's relationship with God, and the integration of life and ministry in the world. As with the Great Banquet in the theme of table fellowship (Luke 14:15–24), meal tables reflect fundamentally our relationship with God and each other. Indeed, dish-making and the meal table have become vehicles of love and grace through Li's mission practice. His kitchen and restaurant have become the pulpit as he creates and presents his imaginative dishes to his clients with the inspiration of the Spirit, the guidance of the Master Chef Jesus Christ and the food substance of the Creator.

Following these narratives of the grassroots, we now offer some grassroots missiological reflections in dialogue with Bosch's *Transforming Mission*.

#### 4 Grassroots Missiological Reflections

The conversion stories and mission practices of the two cases demonstrate a form of 'grassroots missiology' that highlights the themes in the threefold

8 *Huangdi Neijing, Shang Han Lun*, 黄帝内经, 伤寒论, <https://ctext.org/shang-han-lun/ens>.

paradigm articulated by Bosch thirty years ago, namely, mission as inculturation, liberation, and ministry by the whole people of God.

#### 4.1 *Mission as Inculturation*

A striking characteristic of grassroots missiology is the inculturation of mission practice in local soil, as Christian faith is rooted in everyday lived experiences in a particular location and time. As Sallie McFague claims in her metaphorical theology, “Christian theology is always an interpretation of the ‘gospel’ in a particular time and place.”<sup>9</sup> The mission practices of the grassroots provide a basis for the construction of localized missiologies. Bosch rightly discerns the nature of inculturation by asserting the primary agents are the Holy Spirit and the local community, though not excluding the participation of missionary.<sup>10</sup> The case studies from the streets of East Asia provide colourful multifaceted expressions, whether in barber shops or seafood restaurants. This way of developing lived missiology from praxis to praxis gives ‘flesh’ to the framework of inculturation that Bosch provides.

The barber Meng strategically employed a key Chinese Confucian concept of *Tian* (Heaven) outside his shop to convey the God of transcendence and imminence. The term *Tian* evolved but was treated as central throughout the long intellectual history in China. It appears in many places within the Five Classics and the Four Books (*sishu wujing*, 四书五经). The *I-Ching* (易经) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸) begin with the word *Tian*. It refers to a supreme deity in early Confucianism but later became more of an impersonal moral ultimate in neo-Confucianism. Since the time of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), scholars have attempted to find the connection between the Confucian *Tian* and the Christian God. Ricci identified the ancient Chinese term *Shangdi* (上帝) as the supreme God and created a term *Tianzhu* (‘Lord of Heaven’, 天主) to represent the God of the Hebrew Bible in his well-known *Tianzhu Shiye* (天主实义, ‘The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven’). Like Paul in Acts 17, he believed that by affirming ancient Chinese faith, he could pave the way in leading them to Christianity. This has become his most important contribution to the dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism up until today. Without necessarily knowing about the historical and literal meaning of *Tian*, Meng is familiar with the term from everyday experience and the folk religions he was brought up with. He instinctively adapted the term and built a bridge between

9 Sallie McFague and David B. Lott, *Sallie McFague: Collected Readings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014).

10 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 463–65.

Christian faith and Chinese tradition in the streets. The notion of *Tian*, a familiar concept for ordinary Chinese to ask for blessings and protection, turns into an entry point for them to connect with the Christian God.

Meng has connected this ancient divine concept with the contemporary situation of China. According to official data released from the government, as of 2020, China's urbanization rate hit 60.6%, rising from nearly 18% in 1978.<sup>11</sup> In this wave of urbanization, many migrant workers have moved to cities and try to find ways to survive and thrive in a new environment. Hairdressing business has been popular as only simple training is required. With an inculturated name for the divine locating in contextual needs in urban cities, the barber shop becomes a pointer, a sign, a witness to the work of God in everyday lives on the streets of an atheist nation.

In Case 11, master chef Li connects biblical themes with the traditional Chinese dishes he makes, bringing contextual significance to biblical stories on one hand, and Christian faith in the menu before consumers on the other. Meals are treated as important elements of daily life in Chinese culture, thus the saying "people treat meals as *Tian*" (*min yishi weitian*, 民以食为天). For the Daoist founder Laozi, "A sage seeks to satisfy the belly not the eyes" (*shengren weifu bu weimu*, 圣人为腹不为目).<sup>12</sup> In a culture where the meal has a significant role in daily life, Li introduces a redemptive divine drama to the table conversation through the menu he prepares. As a living testimony, like Peter who denied Jesus three times, the dish 'Peter's Chicken Dip' presents an embodied engagement. Likewise, the dish 'Vinegar of the Cross in Victory' gives rise to a new way of sharing the story of the cross through a traditional dish that signifies new birth. In the dish 'Moses' Snake Soup', Li finds the connection between a snake dish that Hong Kong people enjoy and the story of Moses lifting up the bronze serpent (Num. 21.6–9). The banquet of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish' expresses Li's sacrifice of thanksgiving for God's salvation as a disciple of Jesus.

These creative endeavours give new meaning to meal tables—social places for friendship and fellowship amongst Chinese. Meals become an invitation to enter into dialogue, reflection and transformation at tables. A theology of table fellowship—a simple act of being a part of God's hospitality in everyday

11 "China's Urbanization Rate Hits 60.6 pct," (2020) [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-01/19/c\\_138718450.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-01/19/c_138718450.htm). Accessed 16th Feb 2021; Yiping Xiao, Yan Song, and Xiaodong Wu, "How Far Has China's Urbanization Gone?" *Sustainability*, MDPI, Open Access Journal, 10(8), (August 2018), 1–17.

12 Xiaoli Yang, "Meal Customs—Christianity—World Christianity," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (EBR)*, edited by Brian Matz Constance M. Furey, Steven L. McKenzie, Thomas Chr. Römer, Jens Schröter, Barry Dov Walfish, and Eric Ziolkowski (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 236.

life—can be developed from this centre of public memory for traditional values of hospitality, family reunion, and table meals.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, the meal table Li attempts to introduce through his creation of menus reflects the *missio Dei* that the relationships between humans, and between humans and God are reconciled with *shalom*. “Meal customs may express fundamentally our reflection of God ... the meal table can therefore become an image of union between human beings and between human beings and God.”<sup>14</sup>

A grassroots missiology is grounded in the everyday and in indigenous soil through traditional concepts of the divine and eating custom values. Bosch's framework, from a western perspective of the 20th century, names inculturation as an important model of contextualization,<sup>15</sup> which is a term employed from the perspective of outsiders to the indigenous culture. Engagement with grassroots missiology opens up the new possibility, however, of a missiological framework that engages local context from the inside out—a theology that is indigenous, with a multi-directional repertoire. Bosch's use of the overarching ‘indigenizing’ and ‘pilgrim’ principles by Walls remains valuable,<sup>16</sup> as the grassroots missiology learns to discern if the gospel is transforming the culture, or the culture is domesticating the gospel. His missiological framework complements the pragmatic mindset of Chinese missiology that impacts their mission practices and needs to be constantly reflected upon and renewed with the scrutiny of *missio Dei*. Nevertheless, a grassroots missiology reverses the sequence of Paul Steven's ‘living theologically’,<sup>17</sup> that orthopathy and orthopraxy take priority over orthodoxy. The expression of such orthopathy and orthopraxy is here their cry for liberation.

#### 4.2 *Mission as Liberation*

A grassroots missiology views mission as liberation or freedom. It is not so much in the sense of identification with the poor and marginalized, as seen in other liberation theologians in Latin America and that elitist theologians in

13 Xiaoli Yang, *A Dialogue between Haizi's Poetry and the Gospel of Luke—Chinese Homecoming and the Relationship with Jesus Christ*, vol. 9, Theology and Mission in World Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 138–165; see also Xiaoli Yang, “A ‘Steam Boat’ Theology of Home—Reading the Gospel of Luke with Chinese Eyes,” in *Reimagining Home: : Understanding, Reconciling and Engaging with God's Stories Together*, edited by Darrell Jackson, Darren Cronshaw and Rosemary Dewerse (Sydney: Morling, 2018), 227–46.

14 Yang, “Meal Customs,” 237–8.

15 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 458.

16 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, 466.

17 R. Paul Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity: Vocation, Work and Ministry in a Biblical Perspective* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 1999); also R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 243–55.

Asia articulate. Bosch's understanding of liberation is limited to the western theology that identification of the poor and the oppressed needs to be part of the gospel, not merely a social ethics question.<sup>18</sup> He gives substantial affirmation and critique of Liberation theology in Latin America and how the West can learn from it.<sup>19</sup> With regard to developing comprehensive salvation, he asserts that the *totus Christus*—the life, ministry, death, resurrection and his second coming—is 'indispensable' for church and theology.<sup>20</sup> He did not pay attention to the unique form of grassroots Asian Christianity where answers to people's cries for freedom take priority over their material needs.

Over the last thirty years, the growth of Christianity in Asia at the grassroots level has become a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. Chan refutes the elitist theologies that give priority to the socio-political liberation of the poor, instead of the 'freedom cry' of the poor for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup> This form of 'Christophany', similar to that of Paul on the Damascus road, brings a radical paradigm shift in one's experience of conversion when he/she encounters Christ. If the Christian faith is intrinsically missionary, as Bosch contends,<sup>22</sup> then the lived experiences of these Chinese Christians have indeed demonstrated that their conversion encounters become simultaneously the impetus of their mission motivation and practice. From the moment they received Christ into their lives as Lord and Saviour, something dramatic has happened in their lives. The Spirit has invaded their inner-selves and turned their lives upside down. For Meng, it is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that saved his 'face' and that of his community; for Li, it is the Master Chef Jesus Christ who gives him new life and new business. This new paradigmatic change would bring spiritual transformation, followed by material blessings in each of their cases.

In Case 1, the Christological centre is clearly demonstrated in Meng's conversion and mission practice. In an honor-shame society,<sup>23</sup> Chinese believe that domestic shame should not be made public (*jiachou buke waiyang*, 家丑不可外扬). If things do not function properly, it will cause shame on the entire home and one will be regarded as a 'lost person' (*diuren*, 丢人) or having 'lost face' (*diulian*, 丢脸), that is 'disgraced' without dignity. This is clearly demonstrated in Meng's own mother's denouncement of him because of the shame

18 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, 446–8.

19 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, 448–50; 453–8.

20 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, 408–9.

21 Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 103–4.

22 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16., from the section: an interim definition.

23 Honor-shame cultural discussion has been a rising voice in missiology, for example, Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016).

he brought to the entire family. As Chan points out, sin in such a culture is a personal-relational problem. Hence, Christian life is more about community and relationships.<sup>24</sup> For Chinese, Jesus can be easily perceived as both the shame-bearer and honor-winner,<sup>25</sup> who saves 'faces' of individuals and communities. Clearly, Meng's testimony reflects conversion and transformation through a deeply connected network and relationships with his family, colleagues and clients.

The freedom cry is not so much about social injustice or poverty, but honor, restoration and significance. The universal quest of humanity is: Why am I here? What is God's call on my life? As Os Guinness says, "No idea short of God's call can ground and fulfil the truest human desire for purpose and fulfillment."<sup>26</sup> Meng's cries for meaning and significance were answered as he encountered Christ through an evangelistic brochure and a Christian client, just before his plan to rob a bank with guns. Relational restoration with God and others brought material prosperity for him. For the female client who encountered Christ through a simple quote of Martin Luther on the wall, anxiety and depression lifted. The sacredness of the ordinary becomes the vehicle of salvation when men and women reach the end of themselves. The missionary God answers the cries of their souls and fills them with joy and peace, demonstrating the activities of *missio Dei* in the everyday experiences at the grassroots in East Asia.

In Case II, master chef Li's encounter with Christ is somewhat similar when his business faced bankruptcy and his marriage was in crisis. The gods of his superstition could not help him anymore. It was through a client of his restaurant that he encountered Christ in a church during preaching where he was moved to tears. The experience brought about deep repentance and gratitude, reflected in the many dishes he made. These exquisite creations have become his personal testimony of the grace of God to every client in his restaurant, the city and other nations.

Since his conversion, Li has placed his beloved scripture "For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (1 Corinthians 4.15) on the centre wall of his restaurant. He wants to honour Jesus Christ, the Master of life who teaches him culinary art, and also to express his gratitude for the love of the Father God. Before he opens the restaurant each

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24 Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 83, 90.

25 Enoch Wan, "Practical Contextualization: A Case Study of Evangelising Contemporary Chinese," *Chinese Around the World*, (173), (2000), 21.

26 Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Carlisle: Paternoster Lifestyle, 2001), 4.

morning, he spends two hours in the Word reading and praying. Many of his well-known dishes have been inspired by God during this morning quiet time. He is inspired by the Holy Spirit to make dishes from the created things of the Creator, serving his clients and leading them to the Redeemer of the Cross. The Trinitarian theology at the workplace is clearly exemplified in the everyday experience at meal tables.

A grassroots missiology is founded in Christophanic encounters of true liberation when people cry out for freedom and fulfilment. These Christians know that Christ brings paradigm shifts when they encounter the risen Lord in their conversions. Although the freedom they receive through Christ does not exempt them from poverty, their intrinsic value as *imago Dei* is restored and dignified.<sup>27</sup> As in the two cases, however, spiritual fulfilment often brings blessings at the workplace. This is beyond the issue of systemic injustice in the liberation theology that Bosch and other missiologists attempted to grapple with. Asian grassroots Christians make spiritual hunger a priority over material needs, personal salvation over socio-political liberation, and relational evangelism over public proclamation. The consequence however is social transformation that is internally connected with personal freedom.

#### 4.3 *Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God*

The *missio Dei* invites the whole people of God, both clergy and laity, to be the church sent into the world. Adler and Katoneene consider the re-discovery of the laity as of central importance to the life of the church.<sup>28</sup> David Bosch, having examined the evolution of the ordained ministry and the apostolate of the laity of the Catholic church/mission, advocates “a more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God”.<sup>29</sup> Adler and Katoneene outline various World Council of Churches conciliar meetings, along with the emerging of academies, lay centres and courses.<sup>30</sup> Yet a grassroots missiology seeks an organic ecclesiology in the everyday life of real people with real struggles in East Asia. Hence outside/beyond Christendom, a form of grassroots lay ministry has taken place and has been experiencing mushroom-like growth silently in local soil without the dichotomy of clergy and laity as in the western church. It can be said that the house church movement is essentially a movement of

27 See Siu Fung Wu, “Reading Paul: Faith, Work and Poverty,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

28 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

29 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, 484–5.

30 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity,” 660–662,



laity, despite the differentiation of full-time (*quanzhi*, 全职) and part-time ministry (*daizhi*, 带职). The ordination of clergy however has become more formalized in recent years for the sake of preserving sound doctrines within the church networks. In the post-colonial context of Hong Kong the demarcation between clergy and laity is clearer. This is strengthened by a traditional Confucian culture that places high values on authority and hierarchy. In recent years, workplace ministry has been reaffirmed to bridge the sacred/secular divide.

In Case 1, the relational and communal aspect of Chinese culture is the key for the *missio Dei* to extend naturally wherever and whenever in a restricted environment. It is clear that Meng's mission practice is contagious with a series of ripple effects, deriving from his relationships with family, friends, colleagues and clients. As many Chinese Christians do after their own conversion, he takes every opportunity to share the good news. Here, the barber shop becomes a mission field as well as a training ground. We can see in Meng's own narrative that a regular client became an evangelist leading the barber to the Lord. Then the believing barber became a gospel messenger, sharing daily with clients from different classes of society. Clients usually like to return to those who have good hairdressing skills and are easy to talk with. Building on such relationships, evangelism becomes a natural way of sharing the goodness of life, both physical and spiritual. In addition, the experienced barber ministers by demonstrating to the apprentice barbers both skills and mission practice right there and then. In doing so, disciples are multiplied and sent out from mission field to mission field via the platform of barber shops. The gospel spread into a barber shop and went out from the barber shop—an organic ecosystem of evangelism in a new ecclesial form. Here a barber or a client becomes a minister in wide-open barber shops that prove to be a mission field and training ground at the same time, in the streets of a culture antagonistic towards organized religion.

This ecosystem is not just internally generated, but closely connected in partnership with other ministries. For example, Meng received ongoing training and support from Business Fellowship; he also learned about Martin Luther's theology of the 'priesthood of all believers' that caused a paradigm shift in the female client's life. Since the 'Open Door Policy' in 1978, the reformed tradition has become influential in urban cities in China under the influence of Chinese diaspora Christian leaders such as Jonathan Chao (*Zhao Tianen*, 赵天恩, 1938–2004) and Stephen Tong (*Tang Chongrong*, 唐崇荣, born 1940). Thus, it is not unusual for Meng to be familiar with Luther's teachings in Chinese. The partnership with the local church strengthens the spiritual growth of the barbers in training, while learning the skills of hairdressing. The overflow in



evangelism and mission is essentially the expression of the dynamic *missio Dei*, in that the Initiator and Sustainer of mission calls the whole people of God to participate in the active presence and to co-labour with a missionary God.

In Case 11, similar relational evangelism can be seen in Li's testimony. With the help of a mentor in a Christian marketplace ministry, Li learned not only to pray and read the Bible, but also to ask for spiritual wisdom to guide his way of doing business. The Christian mentor became his 'business consultant' and 'mentor'. In a series of prayer breakfasts, table meals and retreats, Li learned how to integrate business and faith. He said, "As if my deadlock is now opened, I have found the true Master of life who teaches me not only about God, self and others, but also the ways of doing business." The Christian marketplace ministry helped Li to rename and redecorate the restaurant, while teaching him about teamwork, accountability and management.<sup>31</sup> Clearly the Christian ministry played a significant role in empowering Li Tang and his business.

In the context of post-colonial Hong Kong, however, Li values the role of ordained ministry far more than those in the mainland where lay ministry is the main mission force. He set up an annual thanksgiving banquet for the ordained pastors who helped him in his spiritual growth. In the first couple of years following his conversion, the pastor of his church followed him up one-on-one. Another pastor arranged for him to attend 'Eating Jesus' Home Meals' where he could learn about evangelistic skills during cooking classes. He co-partnered with another pastor in mission practice and theology at the workplace. While the pastor provided Li with spiritual guidance and training, Li taught the pastor the art of cooking inspired by the Creator God. Being stewards and messengers of the gospel, they have traveled together overseas and shared extensively with those in the marketplace ministry.<sup>32</sup> Beyond his wildest dreams, Li has become a priest extending his kitchen to become a pulpit in the church and the world in partnership with the ordained ministry.

In both cases, the workplace becomes a vocational church. This is likened to Peter's fishing boat that became Jesus' pulpit and the fishing village that became a community gathering place (Matthew 13.1–9; Mark 4.1–9; Luke 5.1–11). The disciples met him, followed him and worshiped him right there and then. Here is also a place of training and equipping: Jesus calls the fisherman

31 Li Tang, "Zuo Zhu Mentu zai Chufang—Wo zai Zhichang Chengzhang he Shifeng de Jingli," 作主门徒在厨房—我在职场成长和事奉的经历," 9.

32 Li Tang, "Zuo Zhu Mentu zai Chufang—Wo zai Zhichang Chengzhang he Shifeng de Jingli," 作主门徒在厨房—我在职场成长和事奉的经历," 12.

Peter to fish for people; he teaches farmers about the Kingdom of God through the parable of the sower.

A grassroots missiology is essentially a mission of laity in East Asia, in partnership with parachurch ministries as well as ordained ministry. The relational and communal nature of Asian culture enhances the contagious spread of the gospel through everyday relationships and lives at a grassroots level. Market-place ministry has played a significant role in recent years to bridge the sacred and secular divide. Organic two-way empowerment between clergy and laity shows that the mission of God is in shared participation with the body of Christ, the whole people of God. Perhaps the lamenting of scholars such as Adler and Katoneene, Moltmann, Bosch and others of the western church,<sup>33</sup> may find comfort that a grassroots missiology from the bottom up has taken place regarding the discovery of the 'apostolate of the laity' or the 'priesthood of all believers' in East Asia.

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided two examples of faith at work in the everyday life of real people with real struggles in East Asia. It has demonstrated that a grassroots missiology is *missio Dei* borne out of the everyday lived experiences of those at the margins, characterized in inculturation, Christophanic encounters, relational evangelism and partnership. *Missio Dei* is not a noun but a verb. The love of God 'spills out' from within, bringing transformation to individuals and communities in the streets of East Asia. On the one hand, it reflects missiological implications from praxis and in turns feeds back to the insiders' praxis; on the other hand, it challenges the narrow views of outsiders in their narrative of the Global East. This grassroots missiology provides an open posture that invites the Trinitarian God to reveal the depth and width of the nature of mission and mystery constantly unfolding in (hi)story. It gives *missio Dei* new meanings and significance in the context of East Asia in the twenty-first century.

Lived Christian faith and practice amongst those at the grassroots in East Asia demonstrates that missiology needs to come down from the exclusive domain of the ivory tower, and move away from desktop, academic, conciliar or armchair theology to grassroots, everyday and grounded theology founded on the contemporary reality of East Asia. Grassroots missiology is one of

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33 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16, 484–5.

orthopraxy in that the grassroots are more interested in experience of God and bearing witness grounded in who God is and what God is doing in the world. Contesting the way of doing missiology in the West and the perspectives that Bosch offered 30 years ago within Christendom, the voices of this ‘upside down’ missiology can be brought into global conversations to challenge and revitalize the Christian faith of the post-Christendom West.

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# “Good Work,” *Missio Dei*, and a Gospel-Worthy Life in Philippians

Sarah Do

## Abstract

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, there exists a dynamic interplay deriving from the phrase good work (ἔργον ἀγαθόν; *ergon agathon*) in 1.6, which has to do with Paul's partnership with the community in Philippi, on the one hand, and God's consummative work on the day of Christ, or the *missio Dei*, on the other. This chapter explores this dialectic as it relates to Paul's appeal for the whole assembly of God to live a gospel-worthy life in Philippians 1.27. This exhortation coheres with David Bosch's paradigm of mission as the “ministry of the whole people of God”, which has everything to do with communal participation in the gospel proclamation. Crucially, this chapter contends that gospel work necessarily features a Christocentric and others-centred praxis as the means to bear the image of Christ in the world. Reflecting on personal experiences within the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia, this chapter considers the outworkings of faithful gospel work amid complex nuances of language and culture across generations, and concludes that Paul's missiology has space for diverse expressions of mission, such that communities challenged by difference may still see possibilities of working together to bear the image of Christ in the world.

## Keywords

Gospel – *missio Dei* – good work – mission – faithful-work praxis – sacrifice

## 1 Introduction: Shining Light amongst Vietnamese Diaspora

The Apostle Paul's missionary enterprise constitutes an all-encapsulating ministry of proclamation, teaching, and nurturing of the local church. This vocation also locates communities of faith as active participants in the *missio Dei*. At the same time, the *missio Dei* ultimately belongs to God. It is clear in the writings of the Apostle that God's love for the world is embodied within and

flows through communities of faith. What is fascinating is that, in the trends of mission history, a missiological perspective that encapsulates mission as ministry by the whole people of God is a more recent paradigmatic shift.<sup>1</sup> It is only in the last 70 or so years that the “laity” has been recognised as crucial to renewal of the church and its mission.<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Kantonee observe this welcome upheaval of the laity/clergy divide as a renewed appreciation for more active engagements in the world that are exercised beyond the ordained priesthood.<sup>3</sup> Yet, we see in the Pauline epistles that, since the early church, the Apostle has already envisioned holistic mission, with the hope to see unified, gospel-centred communities that altogether participate in the *missio Dei*, so as to effectively reflect Christ’s love into the world. Philippians 1.27–30 precisely encapsulates this hope, wherein Paul exhorts the Christ-community in Philippi to “live worthily of the gospel of Christ.”

This paper takes interest in this imperative, especially considering how communities with recent histories of migration bear the image of Christ in the light of added complexities of language and culture across generations. The phenomenon of migration brings forth complex disruptions to community formation, as diaspora communities seek to begin life again (or anew) in radically different contexts. As a Australian born Vietnamese, I have observed the difficulties that the older generations have faced because of their refugee experience. They were forced to navigate foreign languages and cultural experiences that were diverse from their own. Efforts to remember home, which is an exercise of retaining identity, belonging, and connection to Vietnam, can be a deeply traumatic experience. Meanwhile, younger generations of the Vietnamese community are growing up in Australia and are preparing for radically diverse mission fields. Furthermore, there are limitations to stewardship and growth of the church in terms of cultural differences and language barriers, especially when seeking to work together across generations. The vocation to live worthily of the gospel of Christ (Phil 1.27) is a striking one, especially amid communities fractured by the migration experience. How might diasporic communities of faith be able to navigate such significant challenges and continue to faithfully participate in the *missio Dei*? How might we

1 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (New York: Orbis Books, 2011 [1991]), 478–485.

2 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edition, edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva, WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 658–664.

3 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity,” 659–660.

see God's good work (ἔργον ἀγαθόν; *ergon agathon*, Phil 1.6) amid fractured, divided, and conflict-ridden communities? The letter to the Philippians gives us a glimpse of the way that God works—not only as the Initiator in the formation of gospel-oriented communities (Phil 1.6)—but also as Sustainer and Reconciler—ensuring their ongoing growth and participation in the *missio Dei* amid realities of conflict and division. Furthermore, an immigrant perspective helps us to consider ways that a Biblical approach to mission can be sensitive to divisive intersections of culture and language across generations. This paper posits that we can continue to see God's love for and through fractured communities of faith, even those in diaspora who carry the consequences of a forced migration. This has crucial implications for the missional vocation of migrant communities in acknowledging diverse offerings of faith for the sake of the progress of the gospel. Paul's missiology bears important insights for developing a theology of faithful-work praxis in light of generational differences, so that both share in the communal gospel vocation to bear the image of Christ in the world. I will begin by drawing from David Bosch's seminal work on mission to outline Paul's missional strategy, and discuss the significance of Paul's appeals for the Philippians to live a gospel-worthy life as an alternative community located in the Roman Empire.

## 2 *Missio Dei* and Paul's Missionary Enterprise in Philippians

The work of David Bosch gives us insight into the significance of a faithful-work praxis that integrates the gospel community into their existing callings in the world in the light of Paul's missionary enterprise. Bosch highlights that the communities that Paul founded were strategically located in the provincial capitals of certain regions, which included Philippi for Macedonia (Phil 4.15).<sup>4</sup> Philippi, in the time of Paul, had been founded as a Roman colony, and it was a city that was intensely loyal to the emperor's authority in its governance and religious activities.<sup>5</sup> Being situated along the *Via Egnatia*, the main overland route between Rome and the Eastern Empire, Philippi was an ideal location for commerce, trade links, and agriculture. What is noteworthy about Philippi, amongst other metropolises, is that they are the "main centres as far as

4 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 132.

5 Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 4.

communication, culture, commerce, politics, and religion are concerned.”<sup>6</sup> As such, regarding Paul’s missional strategy, Bosch observes that:

Paul thinks regionally, not ethnically; he chooses cities that have a representative character. In each of these he lays the foundations for a Christian community, clearly in the hope that, from these strategic centres, the gospel will be carried into the surrounding countryside and towns.<sup>7</sup>

It would not be surprising that the *ecclesia* in Philippi was made up of those engaged in areas of commerce, trade, and agriculture, and whose work required ongoing engagement in their local contexts. A more contemporary vision of this is offered in another chapter of this volume, where Xiaoli Yang explores the effectiveness of grassroots mission that results from pre-existing social relationships in local workplaces such as barbershops and restaurants.<sup>8</sup> Such examples highlight the strength of grassroots missiology and the promise of effective mission locally. Thus, the gospel mission does not necessitate the withdrawal of believers from society, but rather their ongoing engagement in their vocational locations, and the community of faith in Philippi is no exception. The Apostle emphasises the transformation of believers whose renewed focus is on the effective proclamation of the gospel by means of their conduct as a gospel community.

Bosch highlights that the steady nurture and growth of gospel communities is an integral feature to Paul’s mission. Mission includes forming, deepening, and enduring community relationships in the gospel, which is a necessary supplement to its spread. As noted by Bosch:

[Paul] intercedes on behalf of his congregations and counsels them about a great variety of very practical and down-to-earth matters; he waits for them to grow in spiritual maturity and stewardship, and to become beacons of light in their environment. All of this obviously takes time.<sup>9</sup>

The formation, nurture and growth of gospel communities is vital for communities as they are transformed to become the light of the world for the sake

6 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 132.

7 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 132.

8 Steve Taylor, “Worship, Work and Witness: Action Research in a Local Church,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

9 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 133.



of the gospel. A key element to this strategy for Paul is to identify designated colleagues who are responsible for keeping an account of the believers. It is “through [Paul’s colleagues that] the churches themselves are represented in the Pauline mission and become co-responsible for the work.”<sup>10</sup> It is absolutely necessary that “the foundational relationship between the co-workers and their local churches be taken into account at all times.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, communities of faith are accountable to these representatives, who are accountable to Paul. Consequently, the birth and growth of a missional community correlates to the strengthening of relationships that are focused on the gospel, and the activities of Paul’s co-workers and their depth of their relationship with communities of faith are crucial to the Pauline missionary enterprise. To summarise, Paul’s work consists of the integration of communities of faith into the *missio Dei*, which involves the ongoing growth and stewardship of the church in context, embracing their vocational locations as a key feature for missional effectiveness.

This missional strategy is particularly compelling in view of Vietnamese migrant experiences. The Vietnamese communities are indebted to those who gave hospitality and encouraged our nurture and growth in settling into Australia from the 1970s and onwards. Several of these Vietnamese settlements had carried the gospel across dangerous seas from Vietnam into Australia. In particular, the community I belong to has benefitted greatly from the generous help and love of some Baptists who supported the formation of what is now known as the Vietnamese Evangelical Church in Australia (VECA).<sup>12</sup> The shared work of forming a Vietnamese gospel community in Australia has given possibilities for mission amongst the Vietnamese diaspora over the last forty years. It also reflects a fruitful outcome of effective partnerships for mission over time. However, this has not been without its challenges. The forced migration from the refugee experience presents unique challenges for integration and mission in a radically different context. The complexities of differences in culture and language, especially across generations, have proven difficult to navigate, especially when attempting to unify communities across generations. There is a historical pattern of conflict and division amongst many Vietnamese diasporic church communities, which continues into the present day. Significantly, the added pressure of assimilation into a multicultural context also means that mission to Vietnamese diasporic communities may not be

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10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 134.

11 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 134.

12 The VECA community in Melbourne are indebted to Baptist deacon Doris Fletcher, who warmly welcomed us, guided us, and led us for many years.

shared by younger generations of the faith as they encounter culturally and linguistically diverse mission fields. There is a need for migrant churches to develop their foundations to become a missional community for a radically different context.

Enoch Wan and Thanh Le, who have implemented non-formal lay leadership training programs for the mobilisation of the Vietnamese diaspora communities in Canada, Australia, and Taiwan, have observed that the capacity for mission by the Vietnamese church is limited.<sup>13</sup> The traditional methods that have been used for evangelism in Vietnam are no longer effective for mission in their host countries, and have often yielded little to no progress in the growth of the church community in terms of winning people for Christ. Wan and Le contend that the effective mobilisation of the Vietnamese diaspora is dependent on a communal capacity of being trained and equipped for work in the kingdom of God. Such training must be sensitive to a multicultural, multilingual context. How this can be approached is a significant question that relates to the ecclesial identity and mission of the Vietnamese diasporic church and needs to be carefully addressed.

The calling to partner together in mission is a challenge for migrant communities in the light of generational, cultural and language differences, not least in discerning what it means to be a community on mission for a radically different context. The possibilities afforded to younger generations of the Vietnamese diaspora are new and may be resisted in preference for more traditional methodologies of evangelism. At the same time, such traditional methodologies continue to carry important cultural meaning for Vietnamese communities. Consequently, it seems that there is a rift between generations, as younger generations are exposed to significant upward mobility compared with their elders and are presented with opportunities to easily integrate into diverse mission fields. These certainly include the possibilities for workplace mission, and as such Kara Martin, in another chapter, iterates the importance of ensuring better constructs relating to workplace mission.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, in reflecting on Steve Taylor's work on a paradigmatic change that calls for the *ecclesia docens* (teaching church) to become the *ecclesia discens* (learning church), the Vietnamese refugee experience adds nuance to challenge of this change, and even its resistance, especially as the church witnesses significant

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13 Enoch Wan and Thanh T. Le, *Mobilising Vietnamese Diaspora for the Kingdom* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies of USA, 2014), 139.

14 Kara Martin, "Formed to Be on a Mission for God in the Workplace: Doctors and Teachers' Perspectives," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

differences in what it means to train and equip such diasporic communities for mission.<sup>15</sup>

The Apostle Paul does not deny the complexities of working in a multicultural, intergenerational context. A biblical approach to mission requires sensitivity to the unique challenges that arise amongst diasporic communities of faith. As the Apostle compels the whole assembly of God to participate in the *missio Dei*, he emphasises the importance of a unified focus on the gospel and healthy relationships, even across generations. In an increasingly diverse and consequently disruptive age, Paul's call for the Philippians to live worthily of the gospel is a unifying framework that compels us to create space for varied expressions of faithful work praxis in a rapidly changing context. Importantly, the foundation for the faithful-work praxis of the people is the Apostle's reminder that they are participants in God's good work amongst them, and that God will bring this work to completion on the day of Christ (1.6). In what follows, we will explore the ways God's 'good work' grounds believers in the *missio Dei* through the transformation of ecclesial identity into an alternative community that bears witness to the gospel in a disruptive context. I hope this expository can illumine us to the possibilities of seeing God's ongoing work amongst the Vietnamese diasporic communities of faith as well as compel us towards seeing mission as a shared enterprise, even across a diversity of generations.

### 3 Good Work in Philippians

Work is a recurring theme in Philippians, with its word group and cognates appearing no less than eighteen occasions throughout the letter.<sup>16</sup> It is one of the central themes that is introduced in 1.3–11.<sup>17</sup> Fee states that "Paul is concerned throughout the letter with [the Philippians] present behaviour as reflecting the effective work of the gospel," which highlights work as a key motif.<sup>18</sup> Annang Asumang similarly contends that the mention of work

15 Taylor, "Worship, Work and Witness".

16 These include ἔργον (1.6; 1.22; 2.30); κατεργάζεσθε (2.12); ἐνεργῶν (2.13a); ἐνεργεῖν (2.13b); ποιεῖτε (2.16); λειτουργία (2.17); συνεργὸν (2.25a); λειτουργὸν (2.25b); ἐργάτας (3.2); λατρεῦοντες (3.3); σύζυγε (4.3a); συνεργῶν (4.3b); πράσσετε (4.9); ἰσχύω (4.13a); and ἐνδυναμοῦντί (4.13b).

17 Robert Swift, "The Theme and Structure of Philippians," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (1984): 234–54; 236–37.

18 Fee, *Philippians*, 73; see also M. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*. BTNC (London: Hendrickson, 1998), 62; R. Gundry, *Commentary on Philippians* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker

indicates its importance to Paul's overall pastoral strategy.<sup>19</sup> The term is first found within the phrase ἔργον ἀγαθόν (*ergon agathon*) and this phrase can be divided into two interpretations. The first, as Asumang has noted, is to accentuate the soteric-eschatological work of consummation that God will bring to completion on the day of Christ. A second view warrants a stronger emphasis on the more practical, material service that the Philippians are participants in as they contribute to Paul's ministry. The fact that Paul introduces work in this way alludes to both views are integral elements in the gospel mission. I will examine the interplay of these elements of good work and explore how their interactions may give us insight into work and the mission of the people of God. This section begins with a brief study on "work" in Philippians, before drawing out the implications of the phrase ἔργον ἀγαθόν in the light of the *missio Dei*.

The term 'work' first appears in the phrase ἔργον ἀγαθόν (*ergon agathon*) in Philippians 1.6 in relation to God's work amongst the Philippians, which is being brought to completion on the day of Christ. Paul acknowledges, by means of this phrase, that the Philippians are co-responsible in the work of the *missio Dei*. The phrase immediately follows Paul's mention of the Philippians as partners (κοινωνία; *koinōnia*) alongside Paul in the gospel from the first day (1.5). The strength of Paul's partnership with the Philippians has significant bearing on his mission. He reiterates this throughout Philippians by means of the frequent usage of συν- (*syn-*) prefixes, which gives attached terms a corporate emphasis, suggesting that the Philippians are co-responsible in the work. The contributions that the Philippians have offered to Paul are therefore important features of their ministry together. Paul derives joy from the strengthening of this partner relationship he has with the Philippians, precisely because they have been with him from the first day. The ongoing nature of this partnership assures Paul of God's work amongst the Philippians, as well as his certain hope of the completion of this work on the day of Christ. Furthermore, Paul sees this partnership with the Philippians as an affirmation that the Christ-community plays an active role in the good work of God in a concrete, practical way.

There is a dynamic interplay between the Philippians' good work (1.3–5) and God's good work (1.6–8), then back to the Philippians again (in 1.9–11). For Asumang, this "demonstrates that while ἔργον ἀγαθόν no doubt refers to God's miraculous work among the Philippians, Paul did not view it in exclusively spiritual terms, but also in its ethical and communal manifestations in the

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Academic, 2010); J. Reumann, *Philippians* AB 33B (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 112–15.

19 Annang Asumang, "Perfection of God's Good Work: The Literary and Pastoral Function of the Theme of 'Work' in Philippians," *Conspectus* vol. 13 (2017): 1–55; 13.

Philippians' actions and attitudes."<sup>20</sup> A similar dialectic is observed in 2.12–13, where Paul appeals to the Philippians to continue to “work out their salvation,” for God has so enabled them to will and work for God's good pleasure. The Philippians are close partners not only with Paul, but also with God, who works amongst them, and it is Paul's hope that the Philippians continue to work with God in the *missio Dei*.

Paul's use of the Greek term ἐπιτελέω (*epiteléō*; to complete) in close proximity to ἡμέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (*hēmeras Christou Iēsou*; the day of Christ; cf. 1.10;) in 1.6 correlates with Paul's own hopes for God's transformative work in himself in 3.12. Paul's use of the perfect passive τετελείωμαι (*teteleiōmai*) in 3.12 indicates that the work of God involves Paul's own responsibility of straining toward the eventual goal of salvation, “attaining the last and ultimate goal, blameless at the day of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> Paul's missionary enterprise requires his active contribution to the *missio Dei*, and Paul has the same expectation of the Philippians in their partnership with him in God's transformative work in 1.6.<sup>22</sup> Paul is confident in his role in God's salvific activity because it is set in the character of God “who unfailingly accomplishes what he has set out to do.”<sup>23</sup> By extension, in 1.6 God's good work of salvation amongst the Philippians is assured as they continue to partner with Paul in the ministry.

The phrase ἔργον ἀγαθόν does not only encapsulate the activities of Paul and the Philippians in the gospel, but also God's greater work involving the eschatological completion of all things.<sup>24</sup> That is, the reach of God's ἔργον ἀγαθόν is broad, and recognises “every aspect of the transformative work of God towards that ultimate end.”<sup>25</sup> The establishment and the endurance of the partnership between Paul and the Philippians is evidence of, rather than

20 Asumang, “God's Good Work,” 20. See also J.R. Wagner, “Working Out Salvation: Holiness and Community in Philippians,” in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, edited by K.A. Brower (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 257–74; B. Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 61.

21 Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 175.

22 Michael Bird and Nijay Gupta, *Philippians*, NCB (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 43; G. W. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 50.

23 Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 61.

24 This is a majority interpretation, that ἔργον ἀγαθόν is inclusive of “God's specific work of salvation.” Fee, *Philippians*, 87; cf. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 62; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 64; Silva, *Philippians*, 45.

25 Asumang, “God's good work,” 19.

constitutive of, God's work.<sup>26</sup> Peter O'Brien makes this particular distinction clear, stating that the Philippians' "eager participation in Paul's gospel ministry was not the good work itself, but clear evidence of this work of salvation."<sup>27</sup> The work of salvation is not exhausted by God's activities amongst the Philippians, nor is it exclusively related to their contribution to the *missio Dei*.<sup>28</sup> The work of God's mission, of which the Philippians play a part, is ongoing until the day of Christ (1.6).

Building on Bosch, this exploration on the phrase ἔργον ἀγαθόν in Philippians demonstrates that Paul has located the entire assembly as being co-responsible for participating in the *missio Dei*. Mission cannot be differentiated for the sake of the elect few. Furthermore, the ordained are not "prior to or independent of or over against the church; rather, with the rest of God's people, they *are* the church, sent into the world."<sup>29</sup> This Biblical examination of work in Philippians affirms a theology of the laity as "priesthood of the whole church," to be harnessed in practice.<sup>30</sup> God's mission is a communal effort, and it requires of its participants to effectively partner together and become co-responsible in God's divine activities in the world.

The *missio Dei* has unifying effects upon the communities that participate in it, and it is both a compelling call and a significant challenge in migrant contexts. Language and culture complexities are often points of frustration, especially across generations, resulting in resistance to intergenerational solidarity. This resistance reflects differences in methodological approaches to mission, which appear to be irreconcilable in the Vietnamese church. The unity of the church suffers where there is resistance to traditional methodologies in preference for contemporary methods of mission and vice versa. An underlying consequence is a rejection of culture and language more generally. As a result, mission is no longer perceived in a manner that is sensitive to these nuances, but rather divides generations where culture and language are points of difference. The missional call in Philippians challenges communities to form partnerships that are unified by a shared focus on the gospel. But how might this be achieved in Vietnamese diasporic communities of faith? For Paul, it is possible solely on the premise that the Philippians, and by extension, any community of faith, can harness the appeal in 1.27 to "live worthily of the

26 This is a consistent theme found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2.17; Ephesians 2.10).

27 Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, NIGT Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 64.

28 Asumang, "God's good work," 17.

29 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

30 Bosch, *Transforming mission*, 485.

gospel of Christ.” This exhortation compels us to understand the ways the gospel forms (and transforms) communities of faith into Christ-image bearers for the sake of the *missio Dei*.

#### 4 The Formation of a Gospel Community

In Philippians, as in other Pauline letters, Paul’s whole-hearted and singular focus is the progress of the gospel and this is constitutive of his entire life’s mission. Fee’s words help us to make sense of Paul’s use of gospel throughout Philippians:

By “gospel,” especially in Philippians, Paul refers primarily neither to a body of teaching nor to proclamation. Above all, the gospel has to do with Christ, both his person and his work. To preach Christ is to preach the gospel, which is all about Christ ... Living “worthy of the gospel of Christ” in 1.27, therefore, means to live worthy of Christ as he has been made known and proclaimed in the gospel which has him as its focus and content.<sup>31</sup>

Gospel proclamation is what matters most to Paul and forms the basis for his ability to rejoice amid sufferings in Philippians 1.18. What is interesting is the thoroughly communal nature of this proclamation. In eight out of the nine instances where Paul uses “gospel” in Philippians, the term is found in precisely those contexts relating to how the Philippians have shared in it.<sup>32</sup> Paul does not refer solely to his own ministry to the whole imperial guard (1.12–13). He also affirms the proclamations of “most of the brothers and sisters” who have been made confident to speak the word with boldness and without fear (1.14). Even if Paul is made to suffer more for the gospel, Paul accepts his lot as it contributes to the spread of the gospel. Paul derives joy in the fact that Christ is being proclaimed in every way, whether from false motives or true (1.18). Paul’s rejoicing includes acknowledgment of the participation of the Christ-community in speaking the word of the gospel.

<sup>31</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 82.

<sup>32</sup> Phil. 1.5, 7, 16; 2.22; 4.3, 15 for general and specific acknowledgements of how the Philippians have shared in the gospel; 1.27 features Paul’s appeal to the Philippians to live worthily of the gospel of Christ. The only exclusion is in 1.12, where Paul refers to his own ministry in the gospel.



Paul's loyalty to the Philippians relates to the practical necessity of their continuing with the gospel, which is crucial for his mission. Despite his sufferings, Paul expresses his own joy in experiencing the support of the Philippians in his ministry, which buttresses his own conviction of deliverance (1.19). Michael Bird and Nijay Gupta note that this deliverance does not rely on Paul's confidence of his physical release from prison, but rather "on his experience of participating in Christ's sufferings, the surety of Christ's *parousia*, the hope of sharing in Christ's resurrection."<sup>33</sup> Paul is assured that Christ will be magnified in his own life, whether by life or by death (1.20). Although Paul appears to not have a preference between death or life, he ascertains that to remain with the Philippians is the more fruitful labour (καρπὸς ἔργου; *karpōs ergou* 1.22).<sup>34</sup> Silva correctly determines Paul's resolve here: "[j]ust as in prison [Paul] had become an instrument for the advance of God's word, so upon his release he will be used to bring greater spiritual health to the believers in Philippi."<sup>35</sup> His repeated use of the Greek term προκοπή (*prokopē*; progress) also likens the advance of the gospel whilst Paul was in chains in 1.12 to the Philippian's progress and joy in the faith in 1.25. Paul absolutely expects that he will remain and continue in his work with the Philippians, for it constitutes his own ministry and contribution to God's good work.

Believers who are formed for the *missio Dei* are gospel-focussed partakers in God's work. The Apostle's joy in the light of the good works of the Philippians highlights his confidence that partnerships and working together has ramifications for gospel proclamation. Their mutually supportive partnerships signify the gospel at work through their conduct. Evidently, proclamation and teaching are integral to gospel proclamation, but it is not exhaustive of the gospel. As we will see later, how Paul shares with his co-workers reinforces the conviction that a shared focus on the gospel brings about the possibilities of ongoing unity amongst the community.

Paul's repeated emphasis on communal solidarity amongst the gospel community highlights a conviction on the unifying nature of gospel work. Indeed, living a gospel-worthy life as a collective assembly is crucial to transforming work for mission, and this is Paul's central thesis in Philippians (1.27–30).<sup>36</sup> Paul exhorts the Philippians to "only live worthily of the gospel of Christ," so

33 Bird and Gupta, *Philippians*, 54.

34 N. C. Croy, "'To Die Is Gain' (Philippians 1:19–26), Does Paul Contemplate Suicide?" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 122 (2003): 517–31; Bird and Gupta, *Philippians*, 56.

35 Silva, *Philippians*, 75.

36 Bird and Gupta, *Philippians*, 58; D. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *NovT* 30 (1988): 65–67.



that Paul can see that they are “standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents” (1.27). This has important implications when set against the complexities of language and culture in the migrant experience. A gospel-centric community brings about the possibility of withstanding the threat of division, competition, and disunity amongst believers. A shared focus on the gospel can lead to intergenerational, intercultural partnerships across the community. However, it is crucial to understand precisely what is meant here, for although Paul exhorts the Philippians to “only live worthily of the gospel of Christ” in Philippians 1.27, the realities facing migrant communities are characterised precisely by division, conflicts, and resistance to communal solidarity. The following section explores what it means to “live worthily of the gospel of Christ,” wherein I contend that it has everything to do with communal participation in the gospel proclamation, including a Christocentric, others-centred praxis within, and throughout the *ecclesia*.

## 5 The Vocation of a Gospel Community

The letter to the Philippians is formative for establishing the gospel community and also for reiterating its vocation as an ecclesial identity. The call towards a gospel-worthy life is inherently communal, and its outcome is the unity of the congregation. Paul affirms this by means of the imperative πολιτεύεσθε (*politeuesthe*). Together with μόνον ἀξιῶς (*monon axiōs*), these two phrases suggest a manner of public conduct which is likened to citizens who have the responsibilities of participating in a monarchy or city state. The civic responsibility here foreshadows Paul’s identification of the Philippians as a gospel community with a heavenly commonwealth (cf. 3.20). This gospel identifier stands in tension with their social standing as residents of Philippi, a Roman colony whose allegiance is to *Kaisar Sebastos Kyrios* (Caesar, Emperor, Lord). For Paul, the Philippians are heavenly citizens who are being called to pattern their way of life under the lordship of *Kyrios Iēsous Christos* (Lord, Jesus Christ).<sup>37</sup> In other words, as Geoffrion contends, Paul builds “chiefly on a broad inclusive political/military concept of citizens/soldiers working together, working for each other, working for the advancement of the goals of their commonwealth (*politeuma*).”<sup>38</sup> This patterning of life steels their resolve as a united, alterna-

37 Bird and Gupta, *Philippians*, 59; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 98.

38 T. Geoffrion, *Philippians: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 177–261, 220.

tive community in the gospel, which is a reality that will invariably result in fierce opponents (Philippians 1.28).<sup>39</sup> This resolve points to how the faith and the sufferings of a gospel community are requisite in their self-understanding as an ecclesial identity.

As Dean Flemming has identified, there is a vital link between the internal cohesion of the Philippians and their missional vocation.<sup>40</sup> Paul's language in 1.28 emphasizes the necessity of internal cohesion and solidarity within the group, for their behaviour will become a "sign" of their salvation, and also of the destruction of their enemies. The fact that Paul immediately includes the emphatic clause at the end, "and this from God," demonstrates the cosmic nature of this evidence. It exemplifies to the Philippians that their internal solidarity is linked to God's eschatological judgment.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, it is clear, as Michael Gorman states, that "the exhortations to unity in the community are not intended only to create internal harmony; they serve to ensure the community's public witness to the gospel "in one spirit."<sup>42</sup> In other words, the united resolve of the Philippians is integral to their ecclesial identity as a gospel community, and forms part of their public witness as they partner in God's work.

If, as earlier mentioned, the gospel is the person and work of Christ, then it is crucial for missional communities to be cruciformly shaped. The story of Christ, beautifully articulated in 2.5–11 and forming the centrepiece of the entire letter, is foundational for the missional identity of the Philippians.<sup>43</sup> The shared resolve amongst the Philippians flows from this, and their participation into the *missio Dei* is dependent on the adoption of the mind of Christ (2.5). Missional effectiveness is possible only by means of adopting a Christocentric manner of thinking that involves embodying others-focused, self-giving love for others. In so doing, the Philippians become Christ in the world by means of their shared identity and purpose as a Christ-image bearing community, and their unity bears witness to the God of salvation, who has given grace to the Philippians to believe and to suffer for Him. This is the same calling towards which all missional communities are exhorted.

This call for internal cohesion is compelling amidst the socio-cultural challenges of a Vietnamese migrant church. Communal solidarity could be seen

39 Asumang, "Perfection of God's Good Work," 8.

40 Dean Flemming, "Exploring a missional reading of Scripture: Philippians as a case study," *Evangelical Quarterly* 83(1), (2011): 3–18.

41 Bird and Gupta, *Philippians*, 62; Silva, *Philippians*, 83.

42 Michael Gorman, 'Apologetic and Missional Impulse in the context of the letter,' paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, 2009, 2.

43 Flemming, "Exploring a Missional Reading," 14.

as a lofty and irrelevant ideal for younger generations as their mission fields diversify and training and equipping is easily accessible beyond the bounds of Vietnamese communities of faith. However, a close reading of Philippians compels all generations to resist division and to not give up on the possibility of intergenerational partnerships. There is hope that resisting division might contribute to the further progress of the gospel by means of reflecting a united front that bears witness to God's activities in the world. Not least, we as God's people are challenged by Jesus' call to love one another, for "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, ESV). Crucial to the missional vocation is the love of God reflected amongst the diasporic community, which opens the possibility of maintaining ecclesial solidarity. Furthermore, diverse mission fields need not result in splits, but rather can become an opportunity to honour different modes of mission. As we will see, it is important to discern faithful-work praxis, and the letter to the Philippians will continue to be our guide in offering a framework for this discernment.

## 6 In Service and Sacrifice: Faithful-Work Indicators

In Philippians, Paul describes his partners as co-sharers, co-proclaimers, and co-sufferers alongside Paul in the ministry. He reiterates different kinds of faithful service as he continues to exhort the Philippians to contend together in one Spirit. There are shared features in each of these relationships that help us to determine some faithful-work indicators, which I will now explore.

In Philippians 2.17, Paul makes an example of faithful-work in his mention of the community's sacrifice (θυσία; *thysia*) and their offering of faith (λειτουργία τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν; *leitourgia tēs pisteōs hymōn*). Paul highlights the sacrificial actions of Timothy and Epaphroditus as exemplars that depict a shared focus in the ministry. Throughout Philippians 2.19–24, Paul acknowledges how Timothy shares in Paul's heart for the welfare of the Philippians, which has resulted in the father-son partnership Paul enjoys with him as they slave together in the gospel.<sup>44</sup> In Philippians 2.25, Paul also describes Epaphroditus as a fellow co-worker (συνεργόν; *synergon*) and co-soldier (συστρατιώτην; *systratiōtēn*) alongside Paul, who similarly shares in Paul's desire to be present amongst the Christ-community (2.26). What is particularly interesting is how Paul repeats

44 The Greek retains the verbal form of δουλεύω here, which invokes Paul's earlier description of Timothy and himself as slaves to Christ Jesus in 11. This invocation reveals a close relationship between being in the gospel, and an ongoing servitude to Christ Jesus.

his usage of the cognates of the Greek term λειτουργία (service, ministry, or worship/offering; Philippians 2.17) in terms of the faith of the Philippians, as comparable to Epaphroditus in 2.25 and 2.30 (λειτουργός; servant, minister), in terms of the services that Epaphroditus risked his life for. Paul's descriptors here suggest a common vocation as a gospel community, manifested in the sacrificial acts of service by Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul speaks of Euodia and Syntyche in very much the same spirit in his appeal for these women to "agree in the Lord" in Philippians 4.2. These women have struggled together with Paul in the work of the gospel and are acknowledged as being among Paul's co-workers in Philippians 4.3. They are significant contributors to Paul's ministry, for they are also strong contenders alongside Paul.<sup>45</sup> Paul's appeal here points towards his desire for them to continue to do so, and to see God's work completed amongst these women as they work together to "agree in the Lord."

These exemplars attune the Philippians to how they may partake in the gospel. Through varying means of service in the community, faithful work can be exemplified in others-centred sacrificial acts for the sake of the gospel. Importantly, the exemplars that Paul used to describe Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodia and Syntyche, do *not* exhaust faithful-work praxis. Interestingly, Paul focusses on the ways in which these services are demonstrative of a sacrifice and offering of faith that coincides with his central appeal for the entire community towards others-centred actions. In other words, Paul offers a definition of work that involves an others-focused praxis manifested amongst the community. The desire to partake in the gospel mission should have unifying effects, and this is based on an understanding that contending together in the gospel requires a shared faithful-work praxis. Paul's representatives here reflect the work of the *missio Dei*, and participation in God's salvific purposes includes a mindset of mutual sacrifice and offerings of faith by the whole people of God. The gospel unifies a myriad of methodological approaches to mission on the basis of this faithful-work praxis, and, importantly, exempts none from the call to participate in it. In returning to the unique challenges of a diasporic context, this praxis offers a framework for understanding how different missiologies may continue to contribute to the *missio Dei*, even across language and culture differences amongst generations.

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45 "[W]hen we are thinking of the place of women in the early church and of Paul's attitude to them, that in the Macedonian churches they clearly had a leading place." William Barclay, *The letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians. The New Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1975), 86.

The possibilities for mission are based on a faithful-work praxis that is grounded in a Christocentric manner of thinking. This is a framework that extends to the entire gospel-assembly, which heightens the call for the whole people of God to partake in mission. No believer is exempt from this invitation to contribute to the *missio Dei*; all are to share the mind of Christ (2.2; 2.5). There is a need to reinstate the whole people of God as responsible for tending to the work of the *missio Dei* as part of their contribution in the kingdom of God in their diverse contexts. In consideration of the migrant experience, this means that diverse expressions of faithful-work praxis must be acknowledged, but also will not exhaust the shape of mission by the community. The faithfulness of the community is shown in its capacity to affirm manifold expressions of mission, as well as its ongoing work of seeking and developing creative ways to reach an increasingly diverse mission field.

## 7 Faithful-Work Praxis in Vietnamese Diasporic Communities of Faith

My exploration argues that the gospel is the civic responsibility for all, and this is no exception in a migrant context. Amid significant trauma, separation and loss from the war, the wider Vietnamese community was tasked with the sudden challenge of maintaining their cultures and traditions while navigating a different society. Preserving the richness of the Vietnamese culture is difficult, especially when rearing children involves confronting languages and cultural experiences that are diverse to their familial (and ecclesial) context. In the light of forming a gospel-community in the context of the Vietnamese diaspora, the faithfulness of the older generations amidst significant hardship and suffering has paved the way for the Vietnamese faith communities in Australia to continue. Because of their sacrifice, younger generations of Vietnamese Australians enjoy wider opportunities for work and greater levels of upward mobility. Not least, there is increased capacity for further reach into a culturally diverse mission field. At the same time, the capacity for older generations of Vietnamese communities of faith to address the diverse needs of the mission field in a radically different context is limited. A forced migration has meant that culture and language may be seen as a hindrance to the possibilities of mission, rather than an integral part of its growth. Yet the challenge of Philippians is instructive here, for Philippians affirms the importance of acknowledging and honouring such faithful sacrifices for the sake of the gospel; it is by means of the stewardship of the Vietnamese diaspora who have contributed to formation of a distinctively Vietnamese Christian faith in Australia.

Still, Paul's missiology paves the way for a contemporary re-faithing of work that may be shared across all generations. God's mission continues to be creative and transformative, precisely because faithfulness to the gospel demands an ongoing discernment for re-faithing work for mission. There is space in Paul's missiology to understand the labours of the first-generation as a manifestation of faithful service, demonstrated by their posture of sacrifice for the sake of the future of the church. Present and future generations can continue to discern gospel service in the context of their callings in the world, whilst also honouring the faithful work of those who have gone before. The common missional vocation in Paul's missiology integrates all on the basis that all are called to give an offering of faith for the sake of the gospel. A communal gospel-worthy life is at the fore, bringing forward the possibilities of an intergenerational, intercultural church, working together, contending together, partnering together in the gospel as citizens sharing a heavenly commonwealth.

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# Reading Paul: Faith, Work and Poverty

*Siu Fung Wu*

## Abstract

The Apostle Paul's emphasis on relationship with God by faith has led many to discount the value of work. However, for the poor in many parts of the world, work is essential for their survival. This raises questions about whether mission should be primarily about bringing people to a spiritual journey of faith. This chapter will argue that for Paul, God's purpose is to bring about the transformation of humanity and renewal of creation, and that the community of believers is to bear witness to Christ by conforming to the image of God. And this understanding of God's purpose sees no dichotomy between faith and work, and indeed, work is highly valued. Our first dialogue partner is David Bosch, who advocates for whole-of-life witness to Christ. The other conversation partners are two respected Asian practitioners who work among the poor, namely, Jayakumar Christian and Melba Padilla Maggay. Both of them emphasise the Christian understanding that humans are made in God's image.

## Keywords

The Apostle Paul – faith – work – poverty – witness

## 1 Introduction

When I came to faith in Christ as a teenager in an East Asian city, I found the message of 'justification by faith, not by works' incredibly helpful. I knew that I could never live up to the moral standard set by my Confucian-Daoist-Buddhist upbringing. The fact that my relationship with God is independent of works was—and still is—liberating. But we were low-income garment factory workers in East Asia, working very long hours in unsafe conditions (by western standards). While I hated the mundane, tedious, and tiring work, I knew it was necessary for the family's finances. My mother willingly worked diligently for the future of her children. My father was proud of every piece of garment he



made as an artisan. Work, therefore, was a necessary evil for me, worth doing for our other-centred self-giving Mum, and a source of dignity for Dad.

There is a tendency for the church to view mission in terms of leading individuals to an experience of faith with a spiritual hope for the afterlife. Good work is understood in terms of deeds of mercy for the poor. And agents of mission are trained individuals who bring people to believe in Jesus, and, if needed, perform charitable acts in the process. But this view of God's purpose for the world sees little value in the daily labour of the poor, whose understanding of 'work' ranges from a means for survival to sacrificial act for the sake of others.

In the following I will present an alternative view of the purpose of God in the world, where work is highly valued. I will specifically discuss the place of faith and work among the poor, thus making a special contribution to this volume. I will engage with the Apostle Paul because of his highly significant influence on the church's view of faith, work, and mission. I will argue that, for Paul, God's purpose is that the community of faith may represent Christ—and hence bear witness to him—by living out what it means to be God's image-bearers in a world of suffering and injustice. Simply put, God desires believers to embody Christ in every sphere of daily life. My first conversation partner will be David Bosch, whose discussion on Paul and mission is insightful and thought-provoking. I will also engage with two respected development practitioners in Asia, namely, Jayakumar Christian and Melba Padilla Maggay, and do so in dialogue with Paul. Both Christian and Maggay speak of the importance of recognizing the fact that humans are made in God's image. Their knowledge in the field will provide valuable insights into what Christian praxis may look like today.<sup>1</sup> As far as I know, there are no major studies that examine the interface between faith-and-work in Paul and poverty in Asia.<sup>2</sup> I hope this essay will provoke further thoughts on vocation, work, and faith.<sup>3</sup>

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1 The choice of these two practitioners is based on their undisputed contributions in the field.

2 This chapter is, therefore, a biblical exploration of theology of work in conversation with experienced practitioners.

3 Chapters by David Fagg, "Expressing Faith in the Secular Workplace: Australian Youth Workers" and Garth Eichhorn "Australians at play—entertainment precincts as a context for mission" rightly highlight the secular youth work and mission in secular cities in the West. It should be noted, however, that there is no sharp distinction between the sacred and secular in Paul's thinking and among many Asians today. I welcome Kara Martin's critique of the sacred-secular divide in the Western Protestant church in her chapter "Formed to Be on a Mission for God in the Workplace: Doctors' and Teachers' Perspectives," all in *Transforming*

## 2 Bosch: the Mission of the Whole People of God

Bosch says that the mission of the laity should take place in “the ongoing life of the Christian community ‘in shops, villages, farms, cities, classrooms, homes, law offices, ...’”<sup>4</sup> Lay people should not be ‘mini-pastors,’ nor should there be a separation between ordained and lay ministries. Rather, “it is the community that is the primary bearer of mission.”<sup>5</sup> Put differently, “the whole people of God” is to participate in God’s mission.<sup>6</sup>

Bosch discusses Paul extensively. For Bosch, the church has come “under the spell of Platonic thinking,” and its belief focuses on “the spiritual journey of the individual believer and on a post-mortem afterlife rather than on a future resurrection from the dead.”<sup>7</sup> For Bosch, Jesus-followers should not see themselves as isolated individuals waiting for their afterlife, but a new community in Christ transformed in the here and now.<sup>8</sup>

To be reconciled to God, to be justified, to be transformed in the here and now, is not something that happens to isolated individuals ... incorporation into the Christ-event moves the individual believer into the community of believers ... the church has an eschatological horizon and is, as proleptic manifestation of God’s reign, the beachhead of the new creation ... and the sign of the dawning new age in the midst of the old.<sup>9</sup>

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*Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

4 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 484. Here Bosch cites William Burrows, *New Ministries: The Global Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981), 66.

5 Bosch, *Transforming*, 484.

6 Bosch, *Transforming*, 478–85.

7 Bosch, *Transforming*, 143.

8 Bosch, *Transforming*, 174–5, sees “the church as a new community” as the first characteristic of Paul’s missionary paradigm.

9 Bosch, *Transforming*, 146. Bosch’s view of Paul seems to be heavily influenced by the late J. Christiaan Beker, whose apocalyptic view of Paul is well known. In recent Pauline scholarship, four views of Paul are prominent: Reformational, New Perspective, apocalyptic, and participationist. It is beyond our scope to engage in these views. In my view, all of these have merits, although my position is closest to the last one. For a handy discussion of the four views, see Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds, *Preaching Romans: Four Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019).

Referring to Romans 12, Bosch highlights Paul's call for the Christ-community to perform acts of mercy and practise hospitality.<sup>10</sup> For my purpose, I note that Bosch's reading of Paul demands Jesus-followers "combat the oppressive structures of the powers of sin and death," so that there can be justice and peace in the world.<sup>11</sup>

I am, in broad terms, in agreement with Bosch. But my focus below is something that Bosch does not emphasize, namely, the relationship between faith, work, and the renewal of humanity in Paul's thought. I will argue that, for Paul, God's purpose for the world is the transformation of his image-bearers through 'faith' (Greek: *pistis*) and by the Spirit. This, in turn, is key to understand Paul's view of work and its implications for the poor. Our inquiry will focus on Galatians and Romans, where the apparent contrast between faith and 'works of law' is the sharpest.<sup>12</sup>

### 3 Galatians: Faith Working Itself through Love in Community

One can hardly miss the juxtaposition of faith and 'works of law' in Galatians. For Paul, right standing with God is by 'faith in Christ' (*pistis Christou*) and not by 'works of law' (*erga nomou*), and the Galatians' reception of the Spirit is not based on works of law but the hearing of 'faith' (2.16; 3.2, 5). But the meaning of the Greek word *pistis* and that of the phrase 'works of law' are matters of debate.<sup>13</sup> In the interest of space, I will not enter the debate but instead outline my own view below.

Most likely, 'works of law' does not refer to 'good works in general' because in most instances Paul would have the Jewish law (the Torah) in mind when

10 Bosch, *Transforming*, 152.

11 Bosch, *Transforming*, 178–79.

12 As it will become clear, for Paul, right relationship with God is by *pistis* and independent of 'works of law,' but there is no dichotomy between *pistis* and 'work.' This, however, does not mean that Paul deliberately makes a distinction between 'works' and 'work.' Paul's contexts and agendas in writing Galatians and Romans were not the same as ours today. The following exegetical discussions on Galatians and Romans will focus primarily on Paul's own purposes in writing the letters. But as we will see, the implication for today is that 'work'—as everyday activities—is important, both then and now.

13 Recent contributions to the conversation include Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), and more recently, Nijay Gupta, *Paul and the Language of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020). For a short but comprehensive discussion, see Douglas Moo, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 157–160.

he uses the word 'law' (*nomos*).<sup>14</sup> For many diaspora Jews (like Paul himself), it was Torah-observance (especially the performance of circumcision, sabbath-keeping, and food laws) that marked them out to be the chosen people of God as they lived among idol-worshipping Gentiles in the Roman Empire.

When Paul uses the word *pistis*, or the verb *pisteuō*, in Galatians, he does not simply refer to an intellectual belief.<sup>15</sup> Rather, there is a strong element of trust in relation to Christ. This is the case when he says 'we have believed in Christ' (*episteusamen*) in 2.16. And *pistis* can also mean faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, and allegiance, as Michael Gorman and Matthew Bates rightly argue.<sup>16</sup>

Hotly debated is the meaning of the expression *pistis Christou* (2.16; 3.22), which can be translated as '*pistis* in Christ' or '*pistis* of Christ.'<sup>17</sup> The former affirms the view that human *pistis* is essential to one's right relationship with God. (Note that Paul also uses the verb *pisteuō* in 2.16 to refer to human faith in Christ.) The latter means that relationship with God is the result of the *pistis* of Christ, most likely in terms of his faithful death at the cross. I find it hard to choose between the two, although the latter makes much sense to me theologically. But one possible way forward is to understand the expression in relational terms between Christ and believers. For example, Peter Oakes says:

[*P*]istis Christou is, in terms of trust and fidelity, the way of life ... characteristic of those who are in a properly functioning relationship with Christ. If Paul chose to do so, it would also be a good way of characterizing Christ's mode of engagement in that relationship. He shows fidelity to those who entrust themselves to him.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note that Paul uses the word *pistis* several times by itself without the 'of Christ.' For example, Paul speaks of the hearing of *pistis* in 3.2, 5. And crucially, Paul says in 3.23, "Now before faith (*pistis*) came, we were

14 Exceptions may be "law of God" (Rom 7.22), "law of Christ" (Gal 6.2), and "law of the Spirit" and "law of sin and death" (Rom 8.2). But this depends on one's interpretation.

15 See, for example, Matthew Bates, *Saved by Allegiance Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), 24–25.

16 Michael Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 90; Bates, *Saved*, 77–100. This view of *pistis* coheres with my experience and that of many of my East Asian friends. We used to worship idols, and coming to faith in Christ meant giving our allegiance to him instead of the gods that the idols represented.

17 See the essays in Michael Bird and Preston Sprinkle, eds, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009).

18 Peter Oakes, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 88. Cf. Gupta, *Faith*, 87, who holds a similar view.

imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith (*pistis*) would be revealed.”<sup>19</sup> It seems that in these instances Paul has in mind the ‘Christ-event’ (the coming, death, and resurrection of Christ) because of which a new way of relating to God is available through Christ. That is, before *pistis* came, and until *pistis* was revealed, the law functioned as a guardian (*paidagōgos*) (3.24–25). But now, believers are God’s children through *pistis* (3.26). Right relationship with God has been revealed in Christ through his faithful death on the cross, so that those who believe in him may become God’s children—and this familial relationship is independent of ‘works of law’ (2.16; cf. 3.2, 5).

Does it mean that ‘work’ has no place in the lives of believers? That is, if Paul is adamant that relationship with God is not conditional to Torah-observance, does he see no value in ‘work’—the daily activities of believers? Paul’s answer is a resounding ‘no,’ because he says in 5.6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is *faith working through love* (*pistis di agapēs energoumenē*).”<sup>20</sup> For Paul, freedom from Torah-observance (and elemental spirits) means becoming slaves to one another through love (4.9; 5.13). Indeed, all need to carry one another’s burden and everyone must test his/her own work (*ergon*) (6.2, 4). And Paul says in 6.9, 10, “let us not grow weary in doing good (*kalos*)” and “let us work for the good (*ergazōmetha to agathon*) of all, and especially for those of the household of faith.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, for Paul, love-centred good deeds are essential, especially in communal living.

To understand this fully, one must recall Paul’s words earlier in the letter, ‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.’ (2.19, 20) In the Greek, the ‘crucified with’ (*synestaurōmai*) is in the perfect tense, which refers to the continuing state of being crucified with Christ.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that participation in Christ’s crucifixion—that is, being united in his death—has continual implications for Jesus-followers, in that their whole life is to be shaped by his cruciform death, and love-centred communal behaviour is an integral part of it.<sup>23</sup>

19 Unless otherwise stated, Scripture cited in this chapter are from the NRSV.

20 Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 420, puts it succinctly, “faith ‘works’—expresses itself—in the ultimate form of the Christian ethic, love.” Note that the Greek participle *energoumenē* (‘working’) can be middle or passive voice. I prefer the former. See Moo, *Galatians*, 330, and Martinus de Boer, *Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 318, for why the former is preferred.

21 My translation.

22 Cf. N. T. Wright, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 147.

23 See Michael Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 63–72, for an excellent discussion on Gal 2.15–21 and the concept of co-crucifixion.

Importantly, cruciform love-behaviour is the work of the Spirit and it constitutes the fulfilment of the law. In his extended teaching on “faith working itself through love” in 5.13–26, Paul issues an imperative for his audience to “walk by the Spirit” (*pneumati peripateite*), which effectively means conducting communal life in God’s way by the empowerment of the Spirit (5.16).<sup>24</sup> The Galatians are to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit (5.25). The fruit of the Spirit is first of all ‘love’ (*agapē*), and crucially, the whole law is fulfilled in the love-command in Leviticus 19.18, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Gal 5.13, 22).<sup>25</sup>

In other words, the Spirit-inspired *pistis*-working-itself-through-*agapē* of the Christ-community is God’s way of fulfilling the law.<sup>26</sup> This is, in turn, the outworking of participation in Christ’s cruciform death.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, there is no dichotomy between faith and work in Galatians. And if my interpretation is close to the mark, then it coheres with Bosch’s view that Paul sees believers as a community incorporated into the people of God through the Christ-event, and their good deeds are a sign of the dawning of a new age. Put differently, Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection inaugurated a new era in which believers’ love-centred work would showcase what it means to be people of faith.

#### 4 Romans (1): Transforming Image-bearing

Similar to Galatians, we find a juxtaposition between faith and ‘works of law’ in Romans (Rom 3.27, 28; cf. 4.5; 9.32). Right relationship with God is by *pistis* and is independent of works of law. At the same time, Paul speaks of the fulfilment of the love-command through love. He says:

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Fee, *Presence*, 429–430.

<sup>25</sup> Note that Paul’s preferred language for *the believers’* relationship with the law is the language of fulfilment (Rom 8.3–4; 13.8, 10; Gal 5.14), rather than “do” (*poieō*), “practise” (*prassō*), “keep” (*phyllassō*), or “carry out/complete” (*teleō*). When these verbs are used in relation to the law, Paul doesn’t seem to make it a requirement for believers (Rom 2.14, 25, 26, 27; Gal 3.10, 12; 6.13).

<sup>26</sup> In the words of J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 473, “Paul is at pains to say that, at its base, daily life in God’s church is not many things, but rather one thing: faithful and dynamic love ... Communally enacted love is God’s gift in the Spirit.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Bates, *Salvation*, 192, who says, “Since genuine allegiance cannot be disembodied, allegiance will be manifested by good works performed in union with Jesus the Christ through the Holy Spirit. as the life-giving, *good-work-producing Spirit flows in us ...*” Emphasis added.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled (*peplērōken*) the law. For the commandments ... are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love (*agapē*) 'works' (*ergazetai*) no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love (*agapē*) is the fulfilment (*plērōma*) of the law. (Rom 13.8–10)<sup>28</sup>

In my view, this should be read in conjunction with Romans 8 because of its mention of how the law is fulfilled. Paul says that God sent his Son to be an atoning sacrifice for believers, in order that *the just requirement of the law* may be fulfilled (*plērōthē*) in those who walk by the Spirit and not the flesh (8.3–4).<sup>29</sup> In light of this and 13.8–10, the whole law is fulfilled in the Spirit-empowered behaviour of believers, which is, in turn, based on the atoning death of Christ.

So far what we have found in Romans is similar to what we have learned in Galatians. But the key contribution of Romans to our inquiry is its explicit mention of Adam and the invocation of the Genesis creation accounts. This will, in turn, point us to Paul's understanding of God's purpose for the world, including the daily activities of believers.

Romans 5.12–21 speaks of the formation of a new humanity in Christ out of the humanity in Adam. Paul says, just "as sin came into the world (*kosmos*) through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned" (5.12). But "just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (5.21). Sin and death reign in humanity because of Adam's disobedience (5.14, 17, 21), but by God's abundant grace he has created a new humanity through Christ's obedience (5.15, 17, 20, 21). Paul's repeated references to Adam, and the surpassing grace of God through Jesus, of whom Adam was a type (*typos*; 5.14), invoke the stories in Genesis 1–3. More specifically, Paul's thought seems to be that the death and resurrection of Christ have reversed the sentences in Genesis 3.14–19. The powers of sin and death have been broken, and a new humanity has been created.

Most scholars today recognize that Romans 5–8 is a distinguishable section of the letter, with key themes that plays important roles for Paul's overall argument.<sup>30</sup> In my view, one of those themes is God's purpose in transforming humanity and renewing the entire creation.<sup>31</sup> We have already seen that 5.12–21 refers to a new humanity in Christ. Paul's argument in Romans 5–8 will

28 My translation.

29 Cf. Siu Fung Wu, *Suffering in Romans*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 85–87.

30 See the discussion in Wu, *Romans*, 52–56.

31 See Wu, *Romans*, 177–8.



culminate in 8.18–39, which says that the creation groans and God’s children share in its groaning (8.18–23). The good news is that they are more than conquerors and they participate in the triumph of God (8.31–39). Crucially, Paul speaks of the transformation of believers in 8.29:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image (*eikōn*) of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many sisters and brothers.<sup>32</sup>

I will not enter the debate around foreknowledge and predestination here, except to say that, in my view, God’s “prerogative and power to decide and know in advance” would have been taken for granted by Paul given his Jewish heritage.<sup>33</sup> The point of 8.29 is that God’s purpose in Christ is for believers to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he may be the firstborn among many siblings in the family of God (cf. 2 Cor 3.18; 4.4).

Being conformed to the Son’s image means that believers are to display the glory of the Son and reflect his character as they suffer and groan with creation.<sup>34</sup> In the Roman Empire (and in many cultures today), the images of deities in temples and statues represented the characteristics and glory of the gods. Likewise, the image of the emperor on the Roman coins represented the honour and character of the ruler, who, in turn, was a representative of the gods. At the same time, the references to Adam in Romans 5.12–21 and to creation in 8.18–23 would have invoked the creation accounts in Genesis 1–3. The ‘image’ (*eikōn*) in Rom 8.29, then, is best to be understood in terms of the Jewish notion that human beings are made in God’s image (Gen 1.26–27) and that they are to represent God and reflect his glory and honour (cf. Ps. 8.5). To be conformed with the image of the Son means that Christ-followers are to become Christ-like, and hence God-like, in order that they can bear witness to his goodness and grace in the world. In a real sense, they are the living embodiment of Christ in the world.

How do they bear God’s image? How can they be Christ-like? For Paul, they do that by the inspiration and empowerment of the Spirit and by participating in Christ’s suffering and glory. Those who are led by the Spirit are children of God (Rom 8.14). They have received the Spirit of adoption, and by whom they cry *Abba* Father (8.15). The Spirit testifies that they are God’s children (8.16).

<sup>32</sup> My translation.

<sup>33</sup> Wu, *Romans*, 159.

<sup>34</sup> Wu, *Romans*, 159–162. Cf. Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 201, 227, 251.



And it is these Spirit-led children (*huiioi*) of God that are being conformed to the image of the Son (*huios*) (8.29). Being children and heirs of God also mean sharing in Christ's suffering and glory.

And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with Christ, in order that we may also be glorified with him. (8.17)<sup>35</sup>

The strong sense of participation in Christ is revealed when we consider the three Greek words here:

- *sygklēronomoi* (joint-heirs)
- *sympaschomen* (we suffer with)
- *syndoxasthōmen* (we may be glorified with).

The concentrated use of Greek words with *sy-*, *sym-*, *syn-* prefixes (which are similar to the 'co-' prefix in English) indicates that Paul has in mind the notion of union with Christ.<sup>36</sup> To bear the image of the Son and hence reflect his glory means that Christ-followers need to participate in his suffering. The best way to understand this is that the children of God are to live out a cross-shaped pattern of existence. Just as the mission of the Son of God was to become a human and die as an atoning sacrifice on the cross for humanity (8.3; note the "God sent his Son" in this verse), the mission of the children of God involves sharing in the groaning of creation and what it entails in a world enslaved by sin and death. In other words, their mission is to bear witness to Christ by presenting God as image-bearers in a hurting world.

Paul elaborates on this in his letters to the Corinthians.<sup>37</sup> The message of the crucified Christ is foolishness because it means that the Messiah (the anointed one) died on a Roman cross, a symbol of shame, humiliation, and defeat (1 Cor 1.18–31). To be ministers of reconciliation, Paul and his co-workers carry in their bodies the death of Jesus so that the life of Christ may be made visible (2 Corinthians 4.10). And this is the outworking of being transformed into the image of the Lord from glory to glory by the Spirit (3.18; 4.4). For Paul, to be bearers of God's image has everything to do with participating in Christ's

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35 My translation.

36 For Paul, believers have been crucified with Christ, buried with him, united with his resurrection, and will live with him (Rom 6.4, 5, 6, 8). The notion of union with Christ comes to the fore here, made clear by the string of Greek words with *syn-* or *sym-* prefixes.

37 Space limitations disallow a study of other Pauline letters, except a brief discussion on the Corinthian correspondences.

cross-shaped death, and being transformed by the Spirit so that their lives may be visible demonstrations of his life-giving resurrection.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, we have found that Romans (like Galatians) does not have a dichotomy between faith and work. But in Romans (and 1 and 2 Corinthians) the people of faith are members of a new humanity whose lives are shaped by Christ's cruciform death and transformed by the Spirit. Bosch is right that in Paul's view believers are being transformed in the here and now, and they are the sign of the dawning new age (see above). But Bosch seems to have missed the place of transforming-image-bearing in Paul's thought—a gap that I will now try to fill.

## 5 Romans (2): Transforming Missional Community

What does the Spirit-led transformation look like in practice? At the start of his extended exhortation on communal life in Romans 14.1–15.13, Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (12.2a). The 'conformation,' 'transformation,' and 'mind' here and the verb 'think' in 12.3 echo the conformity to the Son's image and the Spirit-inspired mindset in 8.5–8, 29.<sup>39</sup> This suggests that the cross-shaped Spirit-led conformity with Christ should lead to a transforming pattern of life in community.

In 12.9–21 Paul outlines his vision for the Jesus-community. Not surprisingly, Paul starts with the call to love: "Let love be genuine" and "love one another with mutual affection" (12.9, 10). Importantly, he says, "outdo one another in showing honour" (12.10). Humans are crowned with glory and honour, says the psalmist (Ps. 8.5); and so, God's image-bearers should honour one another. This was highly significant in the intensely hierarchal society in Rome, where there were numerous slaves (about 25–40 percent of population), men had a higher social status than women, and the majority of the population lived near, at,

38 In my view, the sharing in Christ's glory happens partly in this life and will take place in its fullness at the renewal of the whole creation. See Wu, *Romans*, 120–124; Jacob, *Conformed*, 266.

39 A comparison between these words shows a linguistic correlation between 8:29 and 12:2a.  
8:29 *symmorphos* (conform).  
12:2a *syschēmatizō* (different Greek word for "conform").  
12:2a *metamorphoō* (transform).

See also Siu Fung Wu, "Reimagining Home: Reading Romans in Multicultural Australia," in *Reimagining Home*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Rosemary Dewerse and Darrell Jackson (Morling Press: Macquarie Park, 2019), 219–220.

or below subsistence level (probably about 80–90 percent of population).<sup>40</sup> In Romans, Paul envisions an alternative community, where masters honour their slaves, men honour women, the wealthy honour the poor, because all are made in God's image. They are to associate with the lowly (12.16), which would have been countercultural in the Roman society, where the dominant social convention was centred around honour and shame. Paul's exhortation also includes behaviour towards outsiders. The Christ-community is to "extend hospitality to strangers (*tēn philoxenian diōkontes*)," which can be translated as "pursue love-for-strangers" (12.13). This is a good example of Paul's demand to treat people as God's image-bearers, who deserve to be honoured regardless of their ethnicity, and indeed, whether they are followers of Jesus or not.<sup>41</sup>

Mutuality is a key feature in this passage, with immense implications. Jesus-followers rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (12.15). The word *allēlōn* ('one another') appears three times in this passage, and nine times in the section 12.1–15.13. This non-hierarchical communal relationship coheres with the Spirit-inspired familial relationship we find in 8.14–16, 29, where believers are siblings with equal status and all are co-heirs with Christ (but Christ is the firstborn and God is the *Abba* Father). Image-bearers are equal before God, and the transformation of the Spirit enables believers to treat each other as equals and honour outsiders. Importantly, this overturns any power relationships that allow the powerful to oppress the weak. Paul says:

We who are strong (*hoi dynatoi*) ought to put up with the failings of the weak (*tōn adynatōn*), and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." (Rom 15.1–3)

Here we note that the Greek words for 'the strong' and 'the weak' are *hoi dynatoi* and *tōn adynatōn*, which may be translated as 'the powerful' and 'the powerless.' No matter what kinds of people these represent in Paul's mind, the relationship between the two groups seems to be characterized by power

40 See Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 8–11; Bruce Longenecker, *Remember the Poor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 45–46; Wu, *Romans*, 25–38.

41 For a discussion on whether it is accurate to say that the image of God was damaged or marred according to Genesis 3, given the fact that the Scripture does not explicitly say that, see John Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 174–176. See also the brief critique by Siu Fung Wu, "Participating in Christ's Suffering," in *Suffering in Paul* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 92 n. 50.

imbalance. Here Paul exhorts his audience to model after Christ (who did not please himself) and honour one another as truly humans made in God's image. Paul's refusal to use power to overcome power is spelt out most clearly in 2 Corinthians, where he, despite being an apostle and having seen unfathomable visions, resolves to boast in his weakness (2 Cor 12.9–10). "For when I am weak, then I am strong (*dynatos*)," says Paul (12.10b).

It is this kind of power-in-weakness image-bearing that bears witness to Christ in a world of suffering, poverty, and injustice. Paul envisages the house churches in Rome to be an alternative community that lives out a countercultural value system. Indeed, Paul's imperative is that his audience would bless those who persecute them and repay evil with good (Rom 12.14, 17–21). For Paul, right relationship with God is by *pistis* and independent of works of law. But Spirit-empowered, cross-shaped, love-centred behaviour (including doing good to one another and to outsiders) is essential for being representatives of God in an out-of-joint world. Simply put, the believing community is the lived expression of Christ in the world. Thus, Bosch is right that the task of mission hinges on the new community in Christ being transformed at this present time, and that it is to seek justice and peace in the world. In my view, transformation in Paul needs to be understood in light of conformity to Christ's image (Rom 8.29; 2 Cor 3.18; 4.4), and it is in sharing in the cruciform death of the Son—who became human (8.3)!—that believers can be truly human.

## 6 Doing Good Among the Poor in Asia

Having discussed Paul's understanding of God's purpose for humanity, I will engage with two Asian development thinkers and practitioners to see what undergird their praxis. But before that I will explain why I focus on poverty and development. 'Work' is important for the poor. Subsistence farmers need to work to produce crops. Low-income factory workers have to work for a living. Work gives people with a disability self-worth and a source of income. It is true that faith in Christ is important because of the eternal hope it gives, especially when financial hardship takes its toll. But work is also vital for their dignity and economic wellbeing; not only as individuals but also as communities, for often the sharing of resources is an integral part of their survival strategy.

My choice of two non-western dialogue partners is an attempt to avoid a western-centric view of faith and work. Books by Westerners, such as Bryant Myers' *Walking with the Poor*, are valuable resources for transformational

development.<sup>42</sup> But the contributions of non-Westerners are essential.<sup>43</sup> It is my desire that the following will provide an opportunity for conversations between East and West.<sup>44</sup>

## 7 Poverty Is about God's Image-Bearers Becoming Non-persons

Dr Jayakumar Christian is former National Director of World Vision India and author of *God of the Empty-handed*. For him, poverty “disfigures the image of God.”<sup>45</sup> It is “the state of becoming ‘no people’ in their own land” in which the poor “get lost in anonymity.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover, poverty is “specifically about inequality in power relationships. It is about a minority ... [that] monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings.”<sup>47</sup> Those in positions of power “exclude the poor from access to education, wealth and benefits

42 Bryant Myers' *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011)

43 It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss the theology of work among Asians in diaspora in the West. One interesting phenomenon in the West is that there is sometimes a tendency for Asian immigrants to make success at work (especially in high-paying jobs and/or respectable professions) the primary goal in life. This is unhealthy and the emphasis on performance can be stifling for second-generation migrants. See, for example, Dave Park, “Diff’rent Strokes: Why Asian Americans Need a New Theology of Work,” *Sola Network* (February 15, 2021). <https://sola.network/article/why-americans-need-new-theology-of-work>. Accessed 7 Sep 2022

44 John Bottomley's chapter helpfully speaks of a spirituality of wholeness. Bottomley contrasts Western individualism and the holistic view of humanity and creation in Australian Indigenous spirituality. (“Liberation and Idolatry at Work: God's Judgement and Mercy in Covenant Faithfulness” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024). Also, Native North American, Terry LeBlanc, “New Old Perspectives,” in *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective*, edited by Jeffery Greenman and Gene Green (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 165–178, tells us the importance reading the biblical stories from Genesis 1, rather than Genesis 3. Western theology often starts with humanity's disobedience in Genesis 3. But LeBlanc encourages us to start with Genesis 1, where the focus is on the creation and God as the Creator. As we will see below, Genesis 1 is important for our two Asian conversation partners.

45 Jayakumar Christian, *God of the Empty-handed* (Brunswick East, VIC: Acorn Press, 1999), 60.

46 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 60.

47 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 126.

from the system. They seek to play god in the lives of the poor.”<sup>48</sup> They form “god-complexes” that are “clusters of power (social, economic, bureaucratic, political and religious) within the domain of poverty relationships that absolutize themselves to keep the poor powerless.”<sup>49</sup> The poor are held captive by god-complexes, rendering them powerless.

Poverty “mars the identity of the poor.”<sup>50</sup> The powers seek to deceive them “into believing that they are not made in the image of God.”<sup>51</sup> Transformation “involves being made ... into the image of the Son Jesus Christ,” and it “implies restoration of the image of God among the poor.”<sup>52</sup> The church’s responsibility is to challenge the “power assumptions that reinforce oppression and exploitation” and those who play god in the lives of the poor.<sup>53</sup> Jayakumar Christian engages with Romans 8 and speaks of the “restoration of the image of God to humans” through “the new life in the Spirit.”<sup>54</sup> This restoration goes beyond acts of justice and brings healing to the identity of the poor.<sup>55</sup> Importantly, he advocates for a redefinition of power, for Jesus’ perception of power looks more like powerlessness.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, he speaks of “intentional powerlessness,” which is “an act of faith”:

Finally, powerlessness is essentially an act of faith. In our powerlessness, we express our dependence on God. By refusing to play the power game with the powerful, the Christian makes a political statement. Kingdom power proclaims the sovereignty of Jesus’ way over against the powers of this age. Kingdom power proclaims that the way of the kingdom expressed in submission and powerlessness is a more excellent way, a glimmer of the glory of the coming kingdom.<sup>57</sup>

Jayakumar Christian’s emphasis on the restoration of the image of God and the importance of new life in the Spirit echo my reading of Paul. The poor become non-persons when their identity as God’s image-bearers is not respected. Yet God’s purpose is the creation of a new humanity where newness of life is

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48 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 126.

49 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 130.

50 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 147.

51 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 161.

52 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 202.

53 Jayakumar Christian, “A Prophetic Presence in the Margins,” *Transformation* 36(2) (2019), 54.

54 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 203–204.

55 Christian, “Prophetic Presence,” 55.

56 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 207.

57 Christian, *Empty-handed*, 210.

possible through the Spirit. The recognition of unequal power relationships in systems and structures is vital in development practices. I have argued elsewhere that the powers of sin and death are ultimately the forces behind socioeconomic hardship and religio-political oppression according to the worldview in Paul's day.<sup>58</sup> I reckon Paul would agree with Jayakumar Christian, even though the apostle does not make an explicit connection between poverty and cosmic powers. Indeed, Paul's paradoxical power-in-powerlessness is remarkably similar to Jayakumar Christian's view of power.

Finally, Jayakumar Christian critiques the church's tendency to separate development from evangelism. For him, the Gospels speak of no such distinction.<sup>59</sup> A similar critique can be made against the faith–work dichotomy. The separation between faith and work is an artificial and distractive construct.

## 8 Whole-Life Witness to Christ

Dr Melba Padilla Maggay is the founder and director of the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, based in the Philippines. She is a theologian, social anthropologist, and a specialist in intercultural communication. Her book, *Rise Up and Walk: Religion and Culture in Empowering the Poor*, provides us with many insights, not least on culture, poverty, and the whole-of-life witness to Christ.<sup>60</sup>

For Maggay, “all peoples are made in the image of God,” and we “have in our make-up all that it takes to develop cultures and social systems that have their own beauty as well as utility.”<sup>61</sup> Based on Genesis 1.28 (“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it”), Maggay believes that “[b]uilt into our humanness is both the instinctive drive and the ability to grow, to creatively produce and multiply whatever has been entrusted to us.”<sup>62</sup> As such, humans are designed for work and diversity.<sup>63</sup> In particular, Maggay thinks that the

58 Wu, *Romans*, 24–50, 66–70. See also Robert Ewusie Moses, “Discerning the Body of Christ: Paul, Poverty and the Powers,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40.4 (2018), 473–493; *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Principalities and Powers in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 49–79.

59 Jayakumar Christian, “Perspectives on Poverty and Transformation,” in *Signs of Hope in the City*, edited by Graham Hill (Melbourne: International Society for Urban Mission, 2015), 225–226.

60 Melba Padilla Maggay, *Rise Up and Walk: Religion and Culture in Empowering the Poor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015). Among her publications, this is most relevant to our discussion because of its focus on the poor.

61 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 249.

62 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 251.

63 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 252.

incarnation of Jesus shows us what it means to be ‘truly human.’ To be human is “being rooted in a place somewhere, in a particular time and a particular culture.”<sup>64</sup> Diversity of culture is implied here, contrary to the tendency of ‘empires’ to control and impose uniformity among peoples.<sup>65</sup>

Both god-complex and power dynamic are important in Maggay’s understanding of poverty. She agrees with Jayakumar Christian’s notion of god-complex, noting that he speaks from his “philosophically sophisticated Hindu context.”<sup>66</sup> Maggay says:

Primal cultures like the Philippines, on the other hand, may not have the same all-encompassing philosophical web that serves as legitimation for poverty and privilege. Nevertheless, it also has narratives that tend to promote acceptance of evil as an intrinsic part of the order of things.<sup>67</sup>

Maggay also recognizes the issues of power in poverty and development. Since power relationships exist within socioeconomic systems, “[e]conomic empowerment or any attempt at social change can run aground when in conflict with power structures.”<sup>68</sup> Yet the mandate to rule over creation and the prophets’ call to do justice means that we must confront powers because poverty is “perpetuated by injustice that is organized and embedded in structures.”<sup>69</sup>

Maggay’s discussion on the meaning of identity is very helpful. “The Filipino sense of self is like that—we do not think of ourselves, in the first instance, as individuals, but always as part of a larger whole,” she says.<sup>70</sup> This is “far more fundamental” than the group identity one finds in a club or organization in the West. “Strictly speaking, the Filipino sense of self is not so much a *self-identity* as a *shared identity*.”<sup>71</sup> It seems that the corollary is that one must never separate the individuals from the community when it comes to poverty and development.

Maggay advocates for a “‘whole-life’ witness to Christ.”<sup>72</sup> On this point, she cites the Micah Network Declaration (2001):

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64 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 253.

65 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 254.

66 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 287.

67 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 287.

68 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 96.

69 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 294–5.

70 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 238.

71 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 238. Emphasis in the original.

72 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 339.



Integral mission or holistic transformation is the *proclamation* and *demonstration* of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our *proclamation has social consequences* as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our *social involvement has evangelistic consequences* as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ ... Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task.<sup>73</sup>

In many ways Maggay is similar to Jayakumar Christian, not least in terms of her recognition of the importance of humans being made in God's image and the issues around unequal power relationships. But Maggay's focus on the mandate for humans to work and create (based on Gen 1.28) is helpful. Conformity to the image of Christ is not simply about being restored to humanity's former glory, but also the ongoing process of being transformed to fulfil the God-given mandate to rule over creation. The Filipino way of understanding identity (as shared-identity!) reminds us of Bosch's view that transformation should not happen in isolated individuals. As argued above, for Paul, believers—those who have put their trust in Christ and given their allegiance to him—have been incorporated into the people of God. And their vocation is to participate in Christ's cruciform death and life-giving resurrection, in their communal life and in the way they treat those outside the community. Put differently, believers are to embody Christ in the world in every sphere of life. Of course, proclamation of the crucified Christ and risen Lord is vital for Paul (see, for example, Rom 15.20; 1 Cor 17, 23; 15.2; 2 Cor 4.5). But bearing witness through the life and work of the Christ-community is just as important and indeed an integral part of mission, as Maggay argues. Witness to Christ is a whole-of-life matter, and Bosch would agree here.

## 9 Final Reflections

I have argued that, for Paul, the purpose of God is the transformation of humanity and the renewal of the entire creation. The vocation of the Christ-community is to bear witness to God—as representatives of God—by being conformed to the image of Christ through the Spirit. For this faith community, work is an

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73 Maggay, *Rise Up*, 338. Emphasis made by Maggay in her citation.

integral part of their vocation. With this in mind, I will make several further comments on Bosch and praxis.

First, my findings affirm Bosch's view that it is the community that is the primary bearer of mission. The people of God bear witness wherever they are in their own context. Therefore, the task of witnessing is not in the exclusive domain of ordained ministers, or certain members of the laity who have been trained to be 'mini-pastors.'

Second, we have shown that Bosch is right to critique the Platonic tendency to separate the spiritual journey of individual believers from the whole-of-life transformation of the community in the here and now. Likewise, we have dispelled the faith–work dichotomy and the artificial separation of proclamation from the demonstration of the gospel.

Third, Christian development practice must avoid playing god in the poor's lives and challenge the god-complexes embedded in socioeconomic systems and structures. Faith in action is much more than donating one's loose change to charity. It is done by the faith communities patterning themselves after the self-giving love of Christ through the Spirit. The non-poor need to walk with the poor and believe in their gifts and abilities because they are people made in God's image. The poor should be given the opportunity to actively participate in the decision-making process in community development.

I will finish where I began, reflecting on my own experience growing up in an Asian city. Even though work was toil and labour, it had values. As an image-bearer of God, my father should be proud of every piece of garment he made, for it was his creation. My mother's self-giving other-centred attitude towards work likens Jesus' own cruciform love.<sup>74</sup> As for me, I honestly still hate those long hours of mundane and stressful work in the factory. But it was in my desperation that I turned to God and came to faith in the crucified Christ, whose self-sacrificing love-in-action has shown me that I have intrinsic worth and value as a human made in God's image. Such is the transforming power of the mission of God, inviting all to be the living embodiment of Christ in the world, in every sphere of their daily lives.

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74 This is similar to the description of a Chinese woman in Russell Jeung, *At Home in Exile: Meeting Jesus among My Ancestors and Refugee Neighbors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 182–4. Here Russell Jeung says that his mother, Bernice Jeung, laboured for decades to support her own siblings, her husband's siblings, and then her own children. Russell Jeung remarks that his mother's work ethic "stems from her childhood poverty" and work is an expression of "one's persistent dedication to loving one's family and community"—which is not unlike the noble character of the woman in Proverbs 31 (184). Jeung contrasts this with the Western view of seeing work as "self-fulfilling" and an expression of "an individual's own passions and values" (182, 184).

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# Competing with Purpose: Transforming Care in a Care-Less Market

*David M. Benson and Darren Cronshaw*

## Abstract

In the wake of the 2016 Australian Government Productivity Commission Report, the Human Services sector and not-for-profit providers were radically disrupted. While intended to care for ‘the least of these’ on society’s margins, now they must face a deregulated market with competition, contestability, and informed user choice. How, then, can faith-based providers respond to the political mandate which seemingly requires that they ‘compete or die’, while remaining true to their justice mandate? This chapter integrates insights from the Sci-Fi movie *Arrival* and a theology of sport with gifts released in professional rugby league contest, to craft a distinctively Christian worldview and definition of competition as striving together for shalom and salvation. Transforming justice work as ‘competing with purpose’, a theology of competition invites us into *missio Dei* to cultivate the world, repent over false promises, bless the least of these, love sacrificially, reconcile with competing providers as a community of character, and celebrate quality human service that fosters flourishing. In this fragile market of cold calculation, care must emerge from radical grace which alone has the superabundant power of disrupting customary economic relations.

## Keywords

Not-for-profit – social services – competition – theology of sport – narrative theology – shalom – economic wisdom

## 1 Introduction

Many faith-based services are seeking to revisit their core mission and serve people who are most in need while re-shaping themselves to meet government agendas which they neither chose nor desire, but must face in order to continue functioning. Yet there are immense challenges in positioning faith-based

organizations in a highly competitive and sometimes uncertain human services sector. In some countries, governments are making legislative changes that are radically disrupting the Human Services sector and not-for-profit providers. Legislation in areas of disability and aged care, along with competitive tendering in child and family services create further challenges.<sup>1</sup> Faith-based organizations have always faced the tension of maintaining their core values and carefully attending to financial accountability. Now they also must learn to operate in a deregulated market with competition, contestability, and informed user choice. Without betraying their call, this is an exercise in Christian realism. In this context of commercialization—and the potential devaluing of service and humanity—a key question is how faith-based providers can respond to the political mandate which seemingly requires that they ‘compete or die,’ while remaining true to their justice mandate?

In a complex world, facing competition in the not-for-profit sector, it is wise to foster interdisciplinary conversation incorporating politics, economics, and theology. Theologians are prone to offer bold, idealistic pictures of the world, light on the details, and sometimes woefully ignorant of the cut and thrust of politics and market mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> Yet theology must interact, for the church is inherently political, a pilgrim community on trek to the city of God. The church is also inherently economic, made up of stewards tasked with the Father’s household management (*oikonomia*) for the common good of every community. Adler and Katoneene remind us that it is laypeople engaged in secular jobs or ‘worldly’ occupations who represent Christ in the world: “The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories and shops, offices and farms, in political parties, government agencies and countless homes; in the press, radio, television, and in the relationship between nations.”<sup>3</sup> As theologians, we as authors feel called to influence these spheres and in this chapter focus our theological thinking in conversation with politics and economics. These are ‘worldly’ topics but we own that language with appreciation that Christ is concerned with ‘worldly’ matters. Yet we write neither as political nor economic

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- 1 E.g., The Human Services sector and not-for-profit providers have been radically disrupted by: Australian Government, “Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: Identifying Sectors for Reform,” Productivity Commission Report (December 2016) <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/human-services/identifying-reform#report>. Accessed 16 June 2022.
  - 2 Jeremy Kidwell and Sean Doherty, eds, *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), in particular Andy Hartropp, “Why Is Engagement between Christian Economists and Theologians Difficult?” 11–26.
  - 3 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 659 [658–664].

experts. We both started ministry service with young people and transitioned into roles as pastors and practical theologians. A background in physical education teaching for me (Benson) has taught me about sporting competition and how to navigate while on a trek; lessons that I (Cronshaw) have learned as a mid-life triathlete and Army chaplain. In our independent academic work, we have repeatedly discovered the need for a three-way conversation between theology, politics, and economics in every sector including human services, for the purpose-full work we do is often determined by political machinations and economic fluctuations more so than some ideal vision of the world.

We turn first to the question of the purpose, theologically and missiologically, we serve and for which we strive.

## 2 Transforming Mission

People in our communities suffer injustices that those who are more fortunate can only imagine. Society's systems are still failing people who are most marginalized. We need the best of our analysis and creativity in human services work to grapple with these complex issues. Those working from a Christian faith basis need the best of theological and missiological thinking to frame their response to community needs and sector demands.

Four elements of the emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm, as described by David Bosch thirty years ago in his seminal *Transforming Mission*, are particularly relevant. These elements are mission as *missio Dei*, mission as mediating salvation, mission as the quest for justice, and mission as ministry by the whole people of God.<sup>4</sup> These four elements can frame a missiological paradigm shift for human service workers, especially when facing radical change forced by the sector.

*Missio Dei* reveals that the mission of making and remaking the world is God's mission, with which the people of God cooperate. God's mission is broader than just the church. This can start with where the biblical story starts—that God's people are called to cooperate with the Creator in restoring a good creation for the sake of holistic flourishing and the glory of God.<sup>5</sup>

Mission as mediating salvation reminds us that Jesus reconciled humanity back into relationship with God, promising eternal life. Through the repentance

4 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology, 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 402–418, 478–485.

5 Neville Carr, "The Dominion Mandate: Lessons for Pastors, Theologians and Believers," *Ethos engage.mail* (4 August 2020) <http://www.ethos.org.au/online-resources/Engage-Mail/the-dominion-mandate>. Accessed 16 June 2022.

of individuals, saved by grace through faith, a holy nation is formed. This community of God's people mediates blessing to the world as a foretaste of cosmic reconciliation in Christ (Is 50.6; Eph 1.10; 2.8–9; 1 Pt 2.9).<sup>6</sup> Personal salvation must be accompanied by integral mission which addressed people's total needs: present and future, soul and body. Social distress has only increased since Bosch said salvation is needed from "[p]overty, misery, sickness, criminality, and social chaos [of] unheard-of proportions."<sup>7</sup> This parallels Bosch's appeal for mission as the quest for justice and the clear call for social reform and working for human wellbeing as essential rather than a secondary good.<sup>8</sup> Christ is in the world, active in mediating salvation, interpreted broadly.

Finally, mission as ministry by the whole people of God reminds us that the task of participating in *missio Dei*, thereby embodying integral salvation including the quest for justice, is not merely the task of ordained men but all God's people living out their calling: "they are the operational basis from which the *missio Dei* proceeds."<sup>9</sup> As Bosch concluded, we need an organic and less sacral ecclesiology of God's people.<sup>10</sup> In seeking a "systematic ecumenical theology on the laity" and a "re-defined ecclesiology", an understanding of "Christ in the world" is important.<sup>11</sup>

These four elements are important components undergirding Bosch's 'transforming' approach to the study of mission, bolstering his thesis that mission is transformative for individuals and society. To follow in the convictions of ecumenical conversations as far back as the Uppsala assembly (1968), we believe the hopes and dilemmas of the world's needs for peace, justice, creation care, and development call for the whole people of God to participate with God in God's renewal of our world.<sup>12</sup>

A foundational text for Bosch, and for our project of transforming the work of human services, is Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives

6 Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 23–34.

7 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 402–410.

8 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 413 (410–418); also "Mission as Liberation," 442–457.

9 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 483 (478–485).

10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

11 Adler and Katoneene, "Laity," 663.

12 Adler and Katoneene, "Laity," 661.



and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Lk 4:18–19)<sup>13</sup>

Faith-based human services provision, as part of *missio Dei* and an expression of the integral mission of the Nazareth Manifesto, find its purpose within Jesus' mission.

### 3 The Bottom Line

Understood in the context of salvation history, the mission, work, and care of human services has a quadruple bottom line: profit, people, planet, and purpose.<sup>14</sup> These are in no particular priority order, however they do reflect what receives most attention in the care 'industry' today.

First, *economic profitability* does matter. Money is like blood to the body. It is not the point of the body, but if it stops flowing, the person dies. In the same way, money cannot be the end goal of a not-for-profit provider of human services. Cash flow serves the common good. Without it, however, we have nothing left to generously give to those in need. This is the basis for individuals and organizations to seek to live simply and then freely share wealth.

Second, *social capital* is a key performance indicator. In human services work, people are not a means to an end; they are the end.<sup>15</sup> The way we work, and the products we make, should serve connectedness. This has implications for our to-do-list, budgeting, and even the physical space in which we labor. Everything should build people up and link them together in love. This is where 'Christ in the world' is a truth and reality that is transforming of our work. The mission of fostering social capital becomes a response to a God of love who in Christ is actively engaged in God's world. The valuing of people embraces everyone across the social strata. But it must especially be tilted toward care of and employment for those on the margins—including the aged, those living

<sup>13</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 101 (101–114).

<sup>14</sup> Framework from David Benson, "Working Theologically: What on Earth Am I Here For?" Transforming Work Conference, Malyon College, Gaythorne, Qld (20 June 2015) <https://vimeo.com/133257072>. Accessed 2 November 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Theologically understood, the ultimate 'end' is the glory of God. However, when considering 'human services' in and of itself, the this-worldly end must be the care of people, not some other good they instrumentally provide.

with disability, people experiencing homelessness or impacted by family violence. We are called to work for 'generous justice' that benefits people.<sup>16</sup>

Third, *environmental sustainability* deserves to be pursued and measured. The Creator God loves creation. As caretakers, the planet matters. We 'serve' and 'guard' the planet as sacred work akin to Temple duty in God's cosmic garden. As we respect the earth, it provides for our food and livelihoods (Gn 2.15).<sup>17</sup> Whether through traditional church, base communities, or ecological groups, the people of God—in dialogue or cooperation with people who may not be Christians—are reflecting God's light and love and hope for a renewed world.<sup>18</sup> Jubilee, 'The Year of the Lord's favor', is thus far more than preserving what we have. It is about creatively cultivating this world so that everything would flourish. This impacts the materials we use, the waste we generate, and the products we package. We are called to see and reveal the latent potential in every aspect of the world, in our art, our therapy sessions, our construction materials and our research.

Fourth, *spiritual capital* is a final important element of our bottom line, reflecting the ultimate 'end' of all things: the glory of God. We were made from love and for love. God loves the world through 'Christ in the world'. As ecumenical conversations at New Delhi in 1961 reminded us, Christ illuminates the world not from heaven above but incarnate within the world. The role of the people of God is "to serve as reflecting mirrors or focusing lenses, to beam the light into all parts of the life of the world".<sup>19</sup> In developing and exercising our gifts, we give praise to God from whom they came. By pointing people to Jesus, offering to connect them to local church community, and making space for reflection, prayer, and gratitude in our work and rest rhythms, we develop a culture of worship. This reorients our jobs, putting idols of workaholicism, reputation, and money in their place. Our work begins with Sabbath rest.

#### 4 Mandates for *Shalom* and Salvation

Whatever one's particular role in the work of human services, a common motivation is seeking *shalom* and salvation (understood holistically, not

16 Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012).

17 Neville Carr, *The Origins and Purpose of Life: Genesis 1 to 11* (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross, 1993).

18 Adler and Katoneene, "Laity," 664.

19 New Delhi 1961, cited and discussed in Adler and Katoneene, "Laity," 664.

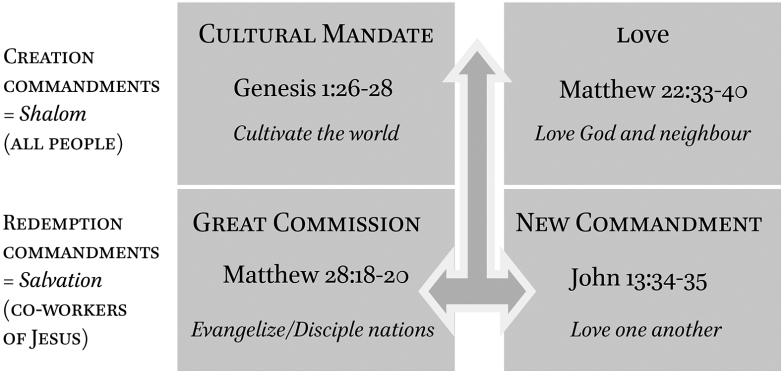


FIGURE 5.1 Four mandates framing *missio Dei*  
SOURCE: DAVID BENSON, “WORKING THEOLOGICALLY: WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?” (2015)

individualistically).<sup>20</sup> The foundation for this missional purpose is expressed in four Scriptural mandates for *missio Dei*, with which the whole people of God are called to cooperate, as shown in Figure 5.1.

Our first and ongoing mission is to love God and others (as instructed by the Great Commandments—Mt 22.33–40) and to cultivate the world (as instructed by the Cultural Mandate—Gn 1.26–28). This is about seeking *shalom*. *Shalom* is the Hebrew word for peace, but exceeds the absence of hostility. It means the flourishing of all things through right relationship with God, oneself, each other, and the rest of creation—like a dance of love. It is work that emerges from God’s rest and sits within God’s sovereignty. *Shalom* is the webbing together of life in justice, fulfilment, beauty, and delight: God’s creational intent.<sup>21</sup> This is an imperative, and invitation, for all people.

Because of our rebellion, however, sin has affected everything. Thus, as followers of Jesus, cooperating in *missio Dei* is also about salvation. Alongside fellow believers, the people of God model to the world how to love each other as a worshipful community (fulfilling the New Commandment—Jn 13.34–35). Moreover, we cultivate people—through evangelism and discipleship—seeing them restored so that they may once again cultivate the world (thus fulfilling the Great Commission—Mt 28.18–20). These redemption commandments (Great Commission and New Commandment) are temporary; they serve the creation commandments (Cultural Mandate and Great Commandments).

20 John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Making the Best of It* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 205–220.  
21 Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10; Ps 85.10–13; Is 2.2–3; 11.6–8; 32.18.

Faith-based human service organizations seek to foster the *shalom* toward which the creation commandments point. We (Benson and Cronshaw) are Baptists by theological conviction, ministry calling, and congregational belonging. The mission of Baptist Care Australia as a social service network is to “work together to be a strong Christian advocate for the marginalized and those at risk in society”.<sup>22</sup> This statement emphasizes the work of justice. It amplifies the voice of the oppressed, punishing wrongdoing, and giving people their rights, going beyond giving people ‘what they deserve’. Transforming the work of human services, as the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.25–37) suggests, involves going beyond calculated returns. What really is good news about Christianity is unmerited favor, love, and compassion, the “new math of grace”.<sup>23</sup> This grace is situated in God’s mission of working for *shalom* and salvation.

The everyday work of God’s people is to seek the holistic flourishing of every element of creation, fostering a creative synergy where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We are called to be the *Tsaddiqim*, a beautiful Hebrew word representing the righteous and just servants of God. We are saved by grace, in order to freely extend this favor to all, out of the overflow—we facilitate rejoicing of the whole city (Prv 11.10). Beyond ‘what people deserve’, we seek to rescue the helpless; foster fairness for the least powerful to participate; and restore dignity, hope, and wholeness in real relationships of care.<sup>24</sup> Transforming the work of human services will follow the call to serve the purpose of *shalom*, this peace-full fusion of duty and delight, a loving collaboration of God, neighbor, nature, and self as one.

## 5 Competition?

This theological and missiological vision of *shalom* can be critiqued as an idealistic vision from above that does not recognise the turmoil of our political and economic predicament. Ideals orient action, but amidst government calls for unregulated competition in the human services sector, Christian realism calls for a radical reframing of this typically adversarial force.

22 Baptist Care Australia, “Strategy,” <https://www.baptistcareaustralia.org.au/about-us/strategy/>. Accessed 16 June 2022.

23 Philip D. Yancey, *What’s So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 59, 70.

24 Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 16–18, 27–63, 249–252.

A fruitful starting place to reflect on the meaning and re-imagining of ‘competing’ emerges from our respective sports interests. As an aged-group triathlete who strives to combine training, nutrition, races, and recovery to get marginal gains in being stronger and faster, I (Cronshaw) picture my racing mates swimming, riding, and running in competition to get to the finish line faster. With my physical education teacher background, I (Benson) picture an athletic contest such as wrestling or running, or the efforts of a team. These sports fit neo-classical definitions of ‘competition’, such as offered by the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Human Services: “striving against one another to attract service users.”<sup>25</sup> This suggests rivalry, pure and simple.

Surely dominating my neighbors or competing against business colleagues or destroying corporate customers clashes with God’s peaceable kingdom.<sup>26</sup> And how is this ‘sustainable’? Somehow you are simultaneously supposed to ‘reduce the price’ and ‘improve the quality’ of your human services, in a ‘contestable’ market flooded with good and bad options and no barriers to entering the fight. The rhetoric is that “providers face a credible threat of replacement if they underperform”. A cynical reading is that the government has divested its responsibility for the disabled and most vulnerable. It has cashed up ‘consumers’ under the rhetoric of ‘user choice’ and watches as providers devour each other, with only the fittest and fast-talkers able to survive.

This conflictual social imaginary seems diametrically opposed to not-for-profits who desire collaboration and sharing, in the pursuit of *shalom* itself. How in this disruptive age can we be the *Tsaddiqim* [holy ones who in Proverbs 11.10 help the city rejoice]? Will not this emphasis on reduced-cost-service result in a bidding war, reducing the quality of services, thereby saddling the community’s most disadvantaged with the tab? Who wants to stop and help the nearly dead person abandoned on the roadside, when their organization is under threat, and there are easier clients to manage? A simple caseload improves metrics, winning the praise and support of one’s political sponsor. How capable is a profoundly disabled person of ‘informed user choice’, discerning between *shalom*-seeking service providers and ‘profiteering sharks’ who will lift what little money was left in their pockets? *Competition*, if thus defined, cuts against a calling to advocate and care for those most at risk in society.

Key reports acknowledge that “not all services are suited to greater competition, contestability and user choice”.<sup>27</sup> ‘For Purpose’ providers often run lean,

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25 Australian Government, “Introducing Competition.”

26 Clive Beed, “Jesus and Competition,” *Faith and Economics* 45 (Spring 2005), 41–57.

27 Australian Government, “Introducing Competition,” 10.

with little time for funding tenders and bureaucratic performance measures. When pitted against marketing machines and for-profit companies who may have less qualms about dropping service quality, these policies may be read as ‘compete or die’. Is win or lose the only and binary option in a seemingly zero-sum game?

We are not surprised that the notions of competition present in the “Competition Policy Review” have left Human Service Providers nervous. The economics of competition is a paradox that can “drive innovation and efficiencies” that release new resources for profit providers and the clients they serve at the same time. Yet, it is still a world away from the synergistic ideal of *shalom*.

How, then, might we reconcile these disparate pictures to ‘compete with purpose’? Soon, we will construct a theology of competition. First, however, a sci-fi movie may help decipher the code.

## 6 Reframing Competition

In the 2017 sci-fi movie *Arrival*, advanced aliens land in high-tech spacecraft on earth, without clearly revealing their intentions. There is a language barrier obscuring what they want. The Army approaches two competing linguists, choosing one to act as a go-between. Dr. Louise Banks refuses to fight for the contract and is nearly passed over for her brash rival. But Banks wants the job. She pleads to the Colonel, “Ask him the Sanskrit word for ‘war’ and its translation.” When the colonel reappears, he reports that the other linguist said *gáviṣṭi*, which means ‘an argument’ where winner takes all. Banks, however, takes *gáviṣṭi* on face-value as literally ‘a desire for more cows’; how they get more cows is undefined. She stresses context and the need to situate ambiguous words in a more gracious worldview.

This subtle definitional distinction exposes underlying motives. It asks whether competition is necessarily a war fuelled by the psychology of zero-sum antagonistic argument? Translated into our real-world predicament, can we as Christians literally re-interpret the Government’s call for ‘competition’ in this present climate as a non-zero-sum game built on ‘communicative action’ and a shared desire for more cows?<sup>28</sup> The Latin root from which definitions derive, *competito*, simply means ‘striving’. Must it be a conflictual ‘striving

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28 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1984–1987).

against', to win at all costs and put your opponent out of business? Or can it be a sportsman-like 'striving together' as a "mutually acceptable quest for excellence" in which we "honour [our] opponents and cooperate to bring out the best in one another"?<sup>29</sup>

Competition releases at least six gifts for those caring to watch: creativity, accountability, performance, sacrifice, character and collaboration, and celebration.<sup>30</sup> Some of these same gifts may well be released through the possible win-win of a cooperative scenario.

Irrespective, given that the playing field on which not-for-profits now perform is essentially competitive, we must pay attention to the particulars that come from competing well. Sporting analogies provide helpful learning. Applied to a team sport, as spectators we enjoy *creativity* as players work together, with wasted efforts weeded out and everyone contributing without free-riding and lazy consumption. There is *accountability* to a common rule book that gives a level playing field and reveals the good and bad of each team, catching cheats and focusing our attention on the flow of the game. We celebrate *performance* in heroic moments that model athletic prowess at its best. We witness *sacrifice* in the midst of intense action as players lay down their own needs to serve the team, or care for an injured opposition player. There is *character and collaboration* as competitors cooperate to achieve their goals, and even experience camaraderie with opponents as sisters and brothers in arms. Finally, there is *celebration* as the struggle and pain are experienced and we retell stories of loss and joy in fighting for something bigger than any one individual. These elements of sport at its best are the same six dynamics at play in redeemed competition in other spheres. For "the God of love is the God of the Games ... indeed the lord of competition".<sup>31</sup>

29 Jeremy R. Treat, "More than a Game: A Theology of Sport," *Themelios* 40 (3) (December 2015), 392–403 at 396 n19; citing Stuart Weir, "Competition as Relationship: Sport as a Mutual Quest for Excellence," in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, edited by Donald Deardorff and John White (Lampeter, Wales: Mellen, 2008), 101–122.

30 Cf. Greg Linville, *Christmanship: A Theology of Competition, Sport, and Sport Ministry* (Canton, OH: Oliver House, 2014).

31 Yvonne S. Smith, Sharon G. Johnson, and Erik M. Hiller, "God of the Games: Towards a Theology of Competition," National CBFA [Christian Business Faculty Association] conference, San Antonio, TX (October 2004), 2–3, 34–35. [https://moam.info/towards-a-theology-of-competition-citeseerx\\_5a0055871723dd12c34c763b.html](https://moam.info/towards-a-theology-of-competition-citeseerx_5a0055871723dd12c34c763b.html). Accessed 16 June 2022. Beyond the scope of this essay, biological reflection upon the competitive process of evolution—which most theologians believe God sovereignly used to shape emergent

After an exhaustive search through every scriptural text referencing ‘competition’, a group of economists and theologians concluded:

- (1) Competition is neither moral nor immoral but a neutral force that can be turned to good or evil; (2) Human beings need to be careful about the goals of competition; and (3) Human beings need to be careful about attitudes or motivations when competing.<sup>32</sup>

They agree that the ideology of competition and fighting over scarce resources can be anti-kingdom. Scripture demonstrates God’s ‘preferential option for the poor’, with prophets like Amos and Micah railing against elites who unfairly compete to crush their neighbors, deaf to the cries of the vulnerable to whom they should extend a helping hand. Smith, Johnson, and Hiller note that competition is assumed as a biblical reality. The bigger issue is in the competitor: how striving can form or deform the image of God in them; whether they gain or lose their orientation to flourishing; and whether this pressure results in love for neighbor or lust for more.

This tension is evident in the movie *Arrival*. The aliens gradually communicate with each competitive country independently. This is akin to government calls for diverse services to step up and face the challenge. Is this a case of ‘beware Greeks bearing gifts’? The aliens are offering something to humanity but in the race to the top it is impossible to tell whether their gift should be translated ‘weapon’ or ‘tool’. The situation returns to a zero-sum argument versus a non-zero-sum desire for more cows. It is the same with not-for-profits receiving government funding. Is it a Trojan horse causing missional drift away from God’s purposes? Or common grace to co-labor for the common good? Or both? We need wisdom to interpret. Spoiler alert for *Arrival*, it turns out these aliens are benevolent. But it takes players like Dr. Banks to reject the conflictual model of ‘striving against to win, destroying the opposition’. She patiently interprets their offer as a ‘striving together for mutual excellence’, a neighbour-love that brings out the best in competing parties.

Related to our project of transforming human services work, scholars—Christian or otherwise—widely agree that neo-classical economics, like most modern disciplines, is utterly secular, built on pragmatic atheism without room

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creation—may yield further insight into how God uses competition toward ultimately good ends.

32 Smith, Johnson and Hiller, “God of the Games”; cf. Clive Beed and Cara Beed, “Is the Bible Value-Neutral Toward Competition?” *Transformation* 32(4) (2015), 256–268.



for divine revelation or involvement.<sup>33</sup> In this view, the “way of the (modern) world” tempts us to “live as if God doesn’t exist.” Its logic reframes everything, even care for the most needy, as an object of monetary value.<sup>34</sup> In an effort to predict how markets will respond, “matching ends and scarce means,” *Homo Sapien* is reduced to ‘rational economic’ person, an autonomous individual whose purposeful action is simply directed by personal ‘utility’. Maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, this worldview assumes that we seek subjective happiness, self-interest, and self-preservation, in a value-free matrix.<sup>35</sup> And to be sure, greed and pride, at least in part, do fuel the fight, generating considerable economic activity.<sup>36</sup>

A modern economic worldview is relevant to Christian not-for-profit human services providers. Without deep formation and a culture of love, we are idolatrously fixated upon our own agency, unable to imagine a higher cause. Accordingly, we’re identical to *Homo economicus* outside the church’s household, buying and selling as our desires direct.<sup>37</sup> We assert, however, that all that exists is provided by God’s handiwork, not simply the ‘invisible hand’ of an amoral market. Competition can be practised in striving together ways and thus potentially transforms our work. We concur with Barnes that although economic modelling is unlikely to lose sway, the Spirit can yet breathe life into its dry bones, animating our choices therein to accord with the virtues of the kingdom, revealing God’s grace in all things.<sup>38</sup> We want to foster a daily attentiveness to this abundant grace of God. We seek to follow the model of Christ whose sacrificial death resulted in resurrection and life to the full. We aspire to walk in the Spirit as members of a community of reconciliation and respect, prioritizing faith and prayer over expertise and technique.<sup>39</sup>

Our argument urges factoring in transforming of work as a motivating force.<sup>40</sup> This argument might reconfigure the binary battle of ‘compete or die’.

33 Hartropp, “Why Is Engagement ... Difficult?,” 16.

34 Craig M. Gay, “The Intrinsic Secularity of Modern Economic Life,” in his *The Way of the (Modern) World: Or, Why It’s Tempting to Live as if God Doesn’t Exist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 131–180.

35 Donald A. Hay, *Economics Today: A Christian Critique* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2004), 100–116.

36 Michael J. Sandel, *Tyranny of Merit: What’s Become of the Common Good?* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

37 James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 27–56.

38 Kenneth J. Barnes, *Redeeming Capitalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

39 Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 3.

40 Cf. Donald Hay and Gordon Menzies, “Is the Model of Human Nature in Economics Fundamentally Flawed? Seeking a Better Model of Economic Behavior,” in *Theology and*

Consider, for instance, the difference ‘striving together’ might make for an organisation like Baptist Care Australia (BCA), as the six aforementioned gifts of competition are released in their aged-care services.

Knowing that BCA’s work is foremost God’s own mission, they may begin each day with prayer and waiting on God’s provision for strength to serve. *Creative* solutions may emerge that make the most of their resources, such as locating care homes near primary schools, with organised visits from the children associated with integrated school projects improving the quality of life for all involved at no extra cost. Knowing that every action is laid bare not simply before one’s boss but the Lord of all assists *accountability*, aligning with the God of justice who challenges short-cuts and wasteful ways, in turn improving return on investment. Once a week, this community could celebrate the *performance* of often unnoticed workers and even community members, reinforcing integral mission according with a quadruple bottom line. This augments the intrinsic motivation of every person to serve, likely increasing output without adding to the number of employees.

Furthermore, by recognising that this ministry of aged care is by the whole people of God, they forge one community on mission—workers, volunteers, and those cared for alike—together *sacrificing* comfort and at times a higher salary so that all may benefit. As the whole community grows in *character*, *collaborating* together to the best of their ability for a greater good, the work of BCA is more likely to attract charitable donations and legacies to honour their dedication to quality care. This in turn will foster greater trust as ‘consumers’ are knit together in a faith-full family, offsetting advertising costs as word-of-mouth *celebrates* their shared quest for justice.

There are no guarantees that eschewing conflictual competition and embracing ‘striving together for excellence’ will ensure a Christian not-for-profit’s survival. However, as our motivational loading shifts from personal utility to a kingdom calling, there are reasons to believe that transforming the work of care may open up unexpected resources and even divine innovation. The spiritual resources of faith-based not-for-profits may even give them a competitive edge in a cut-throat market.

Accepting the reality of competition does not necessarily mean endorsing a binary model of ‘compete or die’. As 2 Corinthians 10.3 says, “Of course, we are living in the world, but we do not wage war in a world-like way. For the weapons of our warfare are not those of the world. Instead, they have the power of God to demolish fortresses.” Or, as Ephesians 6.12 reminds us, “For we do

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*Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, edited by Jeremy Kidwell and Sean Doherty (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 183–198.

not wrestle against flesh and blood [read: against the government or industry competitors, potential entrants, suppliers, buyers or substitutes],<sup>41</sup> but [we do wrestle] against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” This should drive us to our knees, praying for wisdom to sustain our call.

## 7 A Better Story

We believe we can ‘compete with purpose’. But it requires us to see competition with a baptized imagination: less fighting against, and more striving together. Having framed a biblical worldview appropriate to this call, we must now locate it within a larger narrative. Newbigin urges: “The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What [then] is the real story of which my life story is a part?”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, MacIntyre calls for re-membering and retelling mythic (in the sense of primal/foundational) narratives in the formation of children and healthy communities alike: “I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’”<sup>43</sup>

The biblical story offers insight into what “striving-with competition” looks like. With justice as an orientation, transforming human services work positions our jobs in God’s peace-full work in the world. Sherman concurs that God is active through transforming work:

In all these various ways, God the Father continues his creative, sustaining, and redeeming work through our human labor. This gives our work great dignity and purpose. Vocational stewardship starts with celebrating the work itself and recognizing that God cares about it and is accomplishing his purposes through it.<sup>44</sup>

Banks outlines the six primary ways God is laboring in the world, through providential, revelatory, justice, redemptive, compassionate, and creative work.

41 Michael Porter, *Competitive Strategy* (New York: Free Press, 1976); cited by Worsley, “Towards a Theology of Competition,” 70.

42 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 15.

43 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 216.

44 Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 104.

These six ways provide a structure which can be embedded in our telling of the biblical story which follows.<sup>45</sup> Granted, God alone is sovereign, and brooks no competitors. Competing is a human predilection. But when we see our human service within God's work, and our mission within *missio Dei*, we can then get our bearings and 'strive' in a way that images our Saviour. Christ is in the world and God's people are "reflecting mirrors or focusing lenses" who seek to beam that light into dark places of the world.<sup>46</sup> We would like to explore further how God would have us compete in the care industry, using the framework Benson developed of the six-stages of the biblical story of *shalom* from Creation to New Creation by way of the Cross.<sup>47</sup>

This is far more epic than a State of Origin match, but it follows the same contours. When reframed under the Lord of the Games, competition can stimulate hearing the call of God on 'for-purpose' work in the human services sector. As summarised in Table 16.1, this concept follows the Divine story, transforming competition at work into a vehicle for hearing the call of God to cooperate with *missio Dei* of fostering *shalom*.







Creation shows the story of God making *shalom* and inviting all people to follow this example in stewardship and cultivating a wonder-full planet. Everyone, Christian or otherwise, able or disabled, has the duty and delight of developing the garden and contributing to the common good. This leads us to ask how might human services clients be encouraged to 'give back', and not simply receive, taking responsibility for their own welfare and contributing to others? Competition focuses efforts and priorities on what matters most, stimulating love. In this paradise, teeming with diversity, God gives us freedom to move around and consume the fruit from many trees, not binding us to any one producer. We might say that the Creator placed 'user choice at the heart of service delivery'. God gave unhindered 'access to quality services'

45 Robert Banks, "The Place of Work in the Divine Economy: God as Vocational Director and Model," in *Faith Goes to Work: Reflections from the Marketplace*, edited by Robert Banks (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 18–29.

46 Adler and Katoneene, "Laity," 664.

47 The six-part narration of redemptive history is drawn from David Benson, "One Caller, Many Callings," Transforming Work Conference, Malyon College, Gaythorne, Qld, 18 June 2016. <https://vimeo.com/178460381>; David Benson, "Schools, Scripture and Secularisation: A Christian Theological Argument for Incorporating Sacred Texts within Australian Public Education," PhD dissertation, (Brisbane: The University of Queensland, 2016), 76–117. <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:384064>. A more detailed discussion is Dave Benson, "Competing with Purpose, The Theologian: The Justice Compass," Keynote address, "Competing with Purpose: The Politician, the Theologian and the Economist," Baptist Care Australia Conference, Stamford Plaza (June 8, 2017). [bit.ly/CwP-Manuscript-dbenenson2017](http://bit.ly/CwP-Manuscript-dbenenson2017). All accessed 2 November 2022.

TABLE 5.1 Lord of the Games: Reframing competition and call in the biblical story of *shalom*

STAGE		COMPETITION sparks ...	CALLED to ...
CREATION Making <i>shalom</i>		Stewardship	Cultivate
FALL Breaking <i>shalom</i>		Revelation/accountability	Repent/re-think
ISRAEL Seeking <i>shalom</i>		Justice	Bless
JESUS Saving <i>shalom</i>		Redemption	Sacrificially love
CHURCH Embracing <i>shalom</i>		Compassion	Develop character and reconcile
NEW CREATION Entering <i>shalom</i>		Worshipful creativity	Celebrate

SOURCE: DAVID BENSON, “COMPETING WITH PURPOSE, THE THEOLOGIAN: THE JUSTICE COMPASS” (2017).

and exchange, fostering the best interests of Eden’s residents and empowering them to choose wisely.

The Fall is the story of breaking *shalom*. Just as God called human ‘rational consumers’ to account in Eden, and after Babel calls them to repent or literally re-think, so too does competition challenge human service providers to be accountable for promises of ‘quality’, ‘equitable care’ and ‘value’—and value not just profitability but people who matter most.<sup>48</sup> It is important to collect

48 Victor V. Claar, “Value Creation: What Do We Contribute?” in *Economic Wisdom for Churches: A Primer on Stewardship, Poverty and Flourishing*, edited by Adam Joyce and Greg Foster (Deerfield, IL: Trinity International University, 2017), 63–80; Jordan J. Ballor, “Economic Value: What Should We Want?” in *Economic Wisdom for Churches: A Primer on Stewardship, Poverty and Flourishing*, edited by Adam Joyce and Greg Foster (Deerfield, IL: Trinity International University, 2017), 81–99.

accurate data and feedback, amplifying testimonies which demonstrate how an organization's fruit truly nourishes consumers. Integrity and long-term trustworthy service may even win over new customers, becoming the 'default option' for the most vulnerable.

Israel's story is the story of seeking *shalom*. In this frame, the main game of worldly competition is the challenge to bless rather than curse, and love rather than hate the vulnerable foreigners in their midst (Dt 10.12–22). Like Israel, re-faithed justice workers will confront systems that sacrifice the elderly, women, and children in offerings to the idols of mammon and progress. In Proverbs, the righteous, the *Tsaddiqim*, are those "who are willing to disadvantage themselves for the community [especially the most marginalized] while the wicked are those who put their own economic, social, and personal needs ahead of the needs of the community."<sup>49</sup> Not-for-profits will prioritize policies that produce more than they consume and help lift people out of poverty by expanding opportunity for all. This is not just to submit to the State's policies, but to strive for just outcomes for all.

We will expand on Jesus as the story of saving *shalom* in the next section, but the church is the story of embracing *shalom*. *Missio ecclesia* (the mission of the church) is first *missio Dei*, and the church follows God's example and heart to demonstrate compassion in healing the sick, protecting the vulnerable, and restoring communities. In this frame, competition is spurring one another on in love and good deeds as spiritual athletes striving to become like Christ (1 Cor 9.24–27; Heb 10.24); they outdo each other in honor, and compete in rich generosity like the churches helping starving neighbors in Jerusalem (Rom 12.10; 2 Cor 8—9). This is not principally professional paid church workers, but the ministry of all of God's people across all spheres, including collaborating with anyone pursuing the common good and those volunteering with not-for-profits as 'people of peace' (Lk 10.5–7). Fagg and Eichhorn, for instance, offer wisdom on voluntary work in social services, youth work, and street chaplaincy.<sup>50</sup> The church will strive together in compassionate care for the disadvantaged and embrace *shalom* wherever it can be found and fostered.

Finally, the New Creation is the story of entering *shalom* and creatively fashioning and then celebrating total liberation. While we are saved only by grace, this grace is purposed to produce a harvest for which we are held accountable

49 Paraphrased by Timothy Keller; cited by Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 16.

50 Dave Fagg, "Expressing Faith in the Secular Workplace: Australian Youth Workers"; Garth Eichhorn, "Australians at Play—Entertainment Precincts as a context for Mission," both in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

(Lk 3.8–10). Competition, then, reminds us to strive for God's affirmation, as in the Parable of the Tenants of results ('well done'), methods ('good'), and motivation ('trustworthy servant').<sup>51</sup> This is not just about helping individuals but bringing liberation to society's structures—cooperating with "God who links his presence to the elimination of all exploitation, pain, and poverty".<sup>52</sup> Of course, New Creation is a gift from above, so at most we are proleptically embodying a foretaste of the world set right, 'building for the kingdom' though the final product is ultimately not fashioned by human hands (Heb 12.25–29). In the here and now, we will continue to groan and suffer as our human services truly feel, at times, like they are for no profit whatsoever. And yet, the resurrection grounds hopeful action (1 Cor 15.58).<sup>53</sup> We may work in a flooded market of providers, but we can trust that as we start each day on our knees, God will release the knowledge and creativity we need to innovate and foster heaven on earth as a prophetic sign of God's future hope.<sup>54</sup>

## 8 Jesus as Exemplar Health Worker

This whole story is summed up in the life of Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith—our model of godly competition and *the* story of saving *shalom*. Through Jesus' provocative pictures of the kingdom and the ultimate display of self-giving service, being nailed to a cross, Jesus restores us all for better.<sup>55</sup> In forgiving sins and the potent sign of making the lame walk, the blind see, and the deaf hear (Lk 4.18–19), Jesus sets up an ideal for human services to follow. If Jesus competes, it is by walking the extra mile, surpassing the 'justice' required by law, and "pursuing a [radical] level of reciprocity".<sup>56</sup> In the same way the

51 "The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30)," *Theology of Work Project Bible Commentary*. <https://www.theologyofwork.org/new-testament/matthew/living-in-the-new-kingdom-matthew-18-25/the-parable-of-the-talents-matthew-25:14-30>. Accessed 2 November 2022. See also Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth Century Context of Controversy* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2004).

52 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 457 (442–458).

53 N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2011), 168–169, 204–205.

54 Phil. 1.9–10; John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 56, 151, 219–230, esp. 225–226.

55 Following Robert Banks, *God the Worker: Journeys into the Mind, Heart and Imagination of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), we are employing metaphor in reframing Jesus' work as the exemplar health worker. Given that his *saving* of the world (John 3.17) uses the Greek *sozo*—which means to heal and make the total person, including their body, whole—this is a natural metaphor to employ. No sacred–secular divide is permitted.

56 Beed, "Jesus and Competition," 44.



Father sent the Son, the Trinitarian God sends us (Jn 20.21). Following Jesus' lead of saving *shalom*, God's people are called to outdo each other in love and to sacrifice selfish agendas for the sake of waking up and redeeming a broken world.

In this frame, competition tests our resolve. What we really need is "long obedience in the same direction", with our feet oriented toward *shalom*.<sup>57</sup> The message of the resurrection is *Christus Victor* (Christ has conquered). But Christ destroyed his enemies by taking up the cross, and laying down his life for competitors that they may become friends. This kind of radical grace has the power to subvert market determinism and "disrupt customary economic relations" in which only the most combative survive.<sup>58</sup> Jesus, then, perfectly embodies our revised and paradoxical definition of competition as striving together for *shalom*, where the last shall be first.

Hopefully our government's desire, albeit imperfectly, reflects God's: "to reward service providers on a 'value added' basis," as they truly love "the last, the least, the lost, the little ... and the lame".<sup>59</sup> However, Jesus would have us refuse the false choice of 'compete or die'. The wrong kind of competition and profit maximization can catalyze a global financial crisis. Yet a faithful death, crucified by the collusion of power politics and ruthlessly efficient economics, precedes a resurrection and life for all. For those of us seeking to re-faith human services work, we must ask whether we are prepared to enter this suffering, sacrificing our own preferences, utility, and welfare for the greater good. Will we trust Jesus not simply for our personal salvation but our organizational health? As Robert Farrar Capon insists, "grace works only in those who accept their lostness."<sup>60</sup> Competition, and the fear of 'losing', can position us to receive this gospel afresh.

When we embrace our identity as divine losers like Christ—who through sacrifice secured health for all who will—we might see ourselves less as the heroic Good Samaritan going to the needy, and instead identify with the beaten and rejected Christ lying in the ditch. This is suggestive of mission as bold

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57 Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). Peterson borrows this phrase from Nietzsche.

58 Beed, "Jesus and Competition," 46.

59 Robert Farrar Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 174, 180, 205.

60 Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment*, 204.



humility,<sup>61</sup> called for throughout this volume. Whether working from the grass-roots, like Eichhorn's street chaplains,<sup>62</sup> in agencies, or at policy-level advocacy, we are dependent on mercy from God-knows-where to rise up. 'Wounded healers' are the best kind of human service providers in Jesus' kingdom.<sup>63</sup> May the Holy Spirit, through competition, drive us in those Jesus-shaped directions.

## 9 Conclusion

When we re-faith human services work in God's story, competition can be reframed; it offers revelation of real performance, justice in our policies, and sparks stewardship of limited resources. Striving is better understood as working together in service of *shalom*, rather than warring against our neighbor in order to survive. It is about redemption of losers, ourselves included; and it is in service of compassion without discrimination, a channel of God's creativity returned heavenward as worshipful tribute, so that all would flourish.

God's image in us is deformed if we fight as the world fights. However, with a baptized imagination, through competition we may yet hear the call of God in our work to cultivate the world, repent over false promises, and bless the least of these. Ironically, this governmental 'gift' of striving for efficiency, productivity, and profit may be interpreted as God's call to love sacrificially, to reconcile with competing providers, and celebrate quality human service that fosters *shalom*, wherever it is found.

Re-faithed human service workers can engage in competition without losing sight of their mandate to act with love and justice on behalf of the most marginalized in our society. In this fragile market of cold calculation, care must emerge from radical grace which alone has the superabundant power of disrupting customary economic relations. But this requires reframing competition from fighting against, to striving with your neighbors—for holistic flourishing, to the glory of God.

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61 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 494–501; Willem Saayman and Klippies Kritzinger, eds, *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996)

62 Eichhorn, "Australians at Play."

63 Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014)

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**PART 2**

*Church and World*







## Introduction to Part 2

God's love for the world transforms the orientation, resources and practices of the church. The church is structured by the mission of God. The pilgrim people of God are active in the marketplaces and technology companies of the world that God loves. The Church functions in the world as salt for a hungry world and light to shine in any and all darkness of the world including workplaces and industry.

The theme of church in the world draws on several elements of Bosch's emerging paradigm, including Mission as the Church-With-Others, Mission as Inculturation and Mission as Witness to People of other Living Faiths.<sup>1</sup> The theme of church and world is a reframing of Church gathered and church scattered, another of the four areas of theological insight proposed by Adler and Katoneene in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*.

The framing of church in the world is chosen because it shifts the discussion away from the dualisms that can creep into "church gathered" and "church scattered". In particular, it attempts to escape the temptation to map the ministry of the ordained onto church gathered and the ministry of the whole people of God onto church scattered. It also responds to work collected in *Readings in World Mission*. M.M. Thomas urges examination of the impact of the secular for the wholeness of the church, arguing that the world is an agent of redemption for the church. Kraemer outlines the mission of one church in whole being ministry, an idea that develops an ecclesiology which sees the worlds of family, politics, culture and economics with inherent value because they have been placed by God. Each in different ways nurtures a vision of church and world that challenges the dualisms of church gathered and scattered.

A number of chapters provide case studies of correctives and help to further explicate this theme: historical Lausanne perspectives from Gordon Preece, and then Jay Moon in social entrepreneurship, Steve Taylor in a local church and Nigel Wright in a denomination.

Gordon Preece draws on his long involvement with the Lausanne Movement to provide two chapters that examine Lausanne's interest in faith and work. In this section's chapter, Preece argues that an economic trinitarian framework helped connect evangelism and social concern in Lausanne conversations across the period 1974–2004, relevant for integral mission but also by extension a missional theology of work. As we look to the future regarding how we can

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1 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 20th Anniversary edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 377–398, 458–468, 485–501.

better address what Lausanne helpfully labelled the ‘9 to 5 window’ in order to value the public and so-called secular arenas of life and livelihood, it is helpful to understand where the conversation has emerged from and what theological rethinking has shaped it.

Jay Moon describes how entrepreneurial church planters bring together clergy and laity to leverage the networking and value creation provided by business in order to form communities of Christ-followers among unchurched people. By situating these church plants in the marketplace, the gap between the church and world is bridged. Moon refurbishes the paradigm developed by Michael Goldsby designed to describe the characteristics of entrepreneurs<sup>2</sup> and reshapes it to provide a paradigm which provides four contemporary examples of church planters suited for this approach: artist, social scientist, evangelist, and builder. Moon notes that these examples demonstrate the potential of ECPS to integrate faith and work expanding our understanding of possibilities for contemporary tentmakers in every society, not simply distant mission contexts. Moon concludes: “If we can wake up Christians to live out their faith in the marketplace, we could transform the world.”<sup>3</sup>

Steve Taylor outlines that a challenge for missiology is to rightly locate the hermeneutics by which the local church embodies *missio Dei*. As such within his chapter he describes an action research project integrating faith and work in a local church. He describes the specific practices he used in Opawa Baptist Church in New Zealand to encourage learning about the transforming of work: workplace pastoral prayers, ‘spirituality to go’ weekday prayer resources, and God@work discernment groups. Utilizing the categories of *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church) and *ecclesia discens* (the learning church) he analyzed these practices to determine how the local church goes ‘beyond Sunday’ to embody *missio Dei*. In this manner this case study was able to examine locally what it means to engage in ministry as the whole people of God. Taylor’s results found for this local congregation that ‘life beyond Sunday’ could be discerned as ‘communal, particular and Trinitarian in shape’. Hence the chapter provides practical resources that can invigorate mission as faith-ful work witness while understanding the hermeneutics by which the local church might embody the *missio Dei* as learning rather than teaching.

From a local congregational level and as a member of a national learning community, Nigel Wright examines the Church of England’s national Renewal

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2 Michael Goldsby, *The Entrepreneur’s Tool Kit*, CD, The Great Courses (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2014).

3 Personal conversation in June of 2020 with Craig Avery, who started the 210 Leaders for businesspeople in Kentucky. See: 210Leaders.com.

and Reform Program aimed at equipping lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life for fruitful and faithful mission. Wright's objective is to ascertain whether an inherited institution could respond to the call to rediscover the apostolate of the laity. The program itself—along with Wright's investigation—seeks to empower the laity and particularly work placed professionals through and with their local ecclesiastical setting. Wright's findings reveal that although church members do engage in missional activities as they arise in their workplace settings, certain challenges continued to persist. Specific challenges at the local level include lack of biblical engagement and theological literacy, low levels of everyday prayer and worship, and congregants who felt ill equipped to demonstrate faith in their daily lives. Institutional challenges include complacency, self-preservation and parochialism. Wright notes the required imperatives for sustained change lie in culture development whereby the laity, not the institution, become 'the primary body'. Nevertheless, Wright concludes the chapter on a hopeful note understanding that the church in England has only begun its long journey in rediscovering the apostolate of the laity which, given time can profoundly manifest itself as transformative in church and society.

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# **Towards Transforming Faith and Work in Lausanne Congress Evangelicalism (and Ecumenism)**

## **1974–2004**

*Gordon Preece*

### **Abstract**

This first of my two chapters explores precursors of missional theology of work in the Lausanne Congress and ecumenical church. Beginning with the Lausanne I Congress of World Evangelization in 1974, it traces Lausanne and affiliated forums debating competing articles five and six in the Lausanne Covenant on social responsibility and evangelism respectively. These tensions increased in 1980, when Evangelical and Ecumenical missionary conferences in Pattaya and Melbourne stressed different aspects. Leading missional theologian David Bosch and Lausanne's 'Evangelical Pope,' John Stott especially, despite differences, merged these converging streams and leaders toward a more integral mission and of work. Those prolonged 'evangelism versus social responsibility' debates of Lausanne Congresses and forums were echoed regarding relative priorities for the Great Commission (Lausanne 1974), Great Commandment (Manila 1989), and Creation Commission (Pattaya 2004). The Marketplace Ministry group I advised at Pattaya, corrected the Great Creation Omission through an economic trinitarian credal framework of God's work in the three persons' corresponding and complementary missional commissions, Creational, Christological, and Spirit-based. This more integral mission theology of work, overcame theological and missional imbalances—and enabled more progress at Lausanne Congress III in Cape Town. That theme is developed further in Chapter 18 through Newbigin's bridging of ecumenical and evangelical movements, and Faith and Work (FAW) with Missional Church movements.

### **Keywords**

Evangelical – Ecumenical – Bosch – Lausanne – Stott – Mission – Work

## 1 Ecumenism and Evangelicalism's Long Journeys towards Integral Mission of Faith and Work

To understand the increasingly integral nature of work within the Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization movement, involves tracing an ongoing argument especially over evangelism and social concern, but later over tensions regarding creation and evangelistic mandates.<sup>1</sup>

It is often forgotten that Lausanne traces its “roots,” like the ecumenical International Missionary Council’s (IMC), back to the great Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910.<sup>2</sup> So before tackling workplace mission specifically, and debates concerning whether work is primarily a means to the end of evangelism, this chapter will examine comparable early debates about evangelism and social concern involving the key Lausanne figure John Stott and a key ecumenist and missional church founder David Bosch. This prepares for chapter 18’s evaluation of Lausanne’s relationship to global Evangelicalism, Ecumenism, Missional Church movements and analysis of prospects for cooperative cross-fertilization with an evolving Faith at Work (FAW) movement.

The roots of the FAW movement connect with other ecumenical developments in faith and work in ways that are both historic (from around World War II) and contemporary. Stott’s protégé, David Miller, author of the best history of FAW, divides the three modern waves of mission at work as: “the Social Gospel” era (1890s–1945), the more church-domesticated “Ministry of the Laity era” (1945–85), and “the Faith at Work era” (1985–present).<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of the Laity Era built on the between-wars Life and Work movement through the teamwork of Archbishop William Temple and lay leader J. H. Oldham until 1948, when the World Council of Churches (WCC) merged Life and Work with Faith and Order. The WCC Second Congress Evanston Speaks report in 1954 has two sections on “The Laity: The Christian in his Vocation.”<sup>4</sup> WCC operated various Faith and Work Centres, Evangelical Academies and

1 Lausanne’s roots are in the Edinburgh Mission Conference of 1910 and the 1966 Billy Graham led conference in Berlin. Lausanne has an association with the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), which was the re-named World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) in 2001. This provided a reconnection with the Evangelical Alliance founded in 1846.

2 See David Claydon’s introduction in Gordon R. Preece, “Marketplace Ministry: Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP 40),” 2005, 1. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/marketplace-ministry-lop-40> Accessed 2 November 2022.

3 David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (OUP: 2007).

4 SCM, London: 1954, 99–125, especially 104.

conference-centres like Bossey, Switzerland. Much of this anticipated Lausanne III's Workplace Network in Cape Town 2010.

This transformative post-war theology of work by authors like J.H. Oldham, *Work in Modern Society* (1950); Alan Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work* (1952); and Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (1958) nicely fitted the Marshall Recovery Plan for post-war Europe. Lay renewal movements sought to span the Sunday–Monday divide through pastoral affirmation of daily work and its missional relevance. New institutions developed to equip clergy to support laity at work. But in the United States from the late 1940s to 1950s strident anti-Communism limited prophetic preaching and lay activism.

Lesslie Newbigin was a renowned bridge-builder between ecumenism and evangelicalism, and between the Laity and FAW movements. He became the last general secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in the 1950s and then first director of World Mission and Evangelism in the WCC from the New Delhi Assembly 1961 on.<sup>5</sup> Despite rising missional “hesitancy” Newbigin pushed both ecumenicals and evangelicals biblically beyond the traditional one-way missional movement from clergy to laity; and from home, sending church to colonized, receiving church. Concerning faith and work, Newbigin commended WCC's Department on the Laity and challenged churches to see “laymen's work” as not just “auxiliary church workers” on Sunday but “in encounter with the world ... Monday to Saturday.”<sup>6</sup>

The Church's mission should be discharged not primarily by the labours of paid professionals ... but by anonymous non-professional Christians—merchants, travellers, soldiers, coolies, even beggars .... [M]any churches in India ... have come into existence in this way ... the way in which Islam is spreading in some areas. It is probably the way in which Christianity has come to many places. It must certainly be the normal way by which God's total purpose is ... fulfilled.<sup>7</sup>

Sadly, in the tumultuous 1960s much of this earlier ecumenical theology of work and Newbigin's warnings regarding the crisis of missions and clericalizing of laity,<sup>8</sup> were pinched between the WCC's increasingly bureaucratized polit-

5 Mark Laing, “The Church Is the Mission: Integrating the IMC with the WCC,” *International Review of Missions* 100(2) (November 2011): 216–231.

6 Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: International Missionary Council [IMC], 1958), 10.

7 Newbigin, *One Body*, 27.

8 Newbigin, *One Body*, 16–17.

icization, and lay marginalization and domestication by Church and liturgy. One casualty was the Department of the Laity, which closed in 1971.<sup>9</sup> But Newbigin's return to secular Europe in 1974, eager to apply his missional learnings from the Church of South India, corresponded with the first Lausanne Congress and the emergence of Bosch and Stott as dialogical, mission-oriented and broadly evangelical/ecumenical leaders.

## 2 Stott Holding Together Evangelism – Social Concern Tensions of Lausanne Covenant

The Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization I, in Switzerland, heart of Reformation Europe, was authorised and sponsored by renowned U.S. evangelist Billy Graham. The global diplomacy and visionary decisiveness of emerging English “Evangelical Pope” John Stott,<sup>10</sup> as Lausanne chair and chief author of the Lausanne Covenant, was more significant long-term for Lausanne. Another significant factor was that the two-thirds world provided 1000 of 2430 delegates. Lausanne I affirmed the Great Commission (Matthew 28.16–20) as essential to Evangelicalism, while a relentlessly ticking giant clock signified billions of unreached peoples.

The first Lausanne Covenant draft barely mentioned social concern. Graham's influential position was that “The Gospel is not a social Gospel but it has social implications.”<sup>11</sup> Yet the delegates raised issues of injustice and integral mission, especially young Latin American missional theologians and International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) university workers René Padilla, Samuel Escobar, and Orlando Costas. Stott, himself a university evangelist, saw them as Lausanne's future.<sup>12</sup>

9 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 658–664.

10 For tributes on his death see “John Stott, ‘Apostle’ of Evangelical Unity,” *Equip* 11 (December 2011), including Gordon Preece, “John Stott: Evangelical Pope or ‘Monk’?”, 3–5. Stott's masterful Covenant editing gradually assuaged U.S. fears of the social gospel in Lausanne.

11 Graham's refusal to segregate southern audiences before the 1964 Civil Rights Act was a key example for some Evangelicals. Daryl Lovell, “How Billy Graham Contributed to Social Change, and Reached Across Lines of Demarcation.” Syracuse University: *Arts & Culture* (February 21, 2018), <https://news.syr.edu/blog/2018/02/21/how-billy-graham-contributed-to-social-change-and-reached-across-lines-of-demarcation/>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

12 Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 173.

The Radical Discipleship group (including Australian Baptists Athol Gill and John Hirt, and American Anabaptist John Howard Yoder) produced an alternative document stressing the mutual relationship of evangelism and social concern/justice in mission.<sup>13</sup> Elements of their final paragraph were included in the largest paragraph, no. 5, of the Lausanne Covenant, which some 2000 of 2473 delegates signed. The Covenant affirmed God as creator of all people, made in God's image, distinguished political liberation from salvation, and stressed the gospel's transformative, reconciling effects on individuals and society, against all oppression.<sup>14</sup> This synthesized much evangelical mission thought since the 1960s and was "a big step forward."<sup>15</sup>

Lausanne I's global effect was similar in scale to the "irreversible difference" Vatican Council II (1962–65) made a decade earlier to Catholic worldly engagement. After Lausanne, world Evangelicalism changed. No longer could "social action" or a gospel for the poor be identified with theological liberals, nor could it be assumed "that mission and evangelism were essentially synonymous terms." Critically, Lausanne revealed the dawn of "a radical de-centring of the geographical and cultural identity of Evangelicalism" towards the global South, with no more missional monopoly of strategy or movement from the global North.<sup>16</sup>

However, despite half of the delegates being under 44, and 1000 from the two-thirds world, two groups were under-represented at Lausanne I. The first was a miniscule 7 per cent of female delegates. Second, was the laity, with under 10 per cent in attendance (compared to 90 per cent professional clergy or missionaries). This 10% was way below Graham's target of a third of

13 "Theological Implications of Radical Discipleship" in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, edited by J.D. Douglas (Minneapolis: Worldwide, 1975), 1294–96.

14 Stott's Lausanne opening address used Jesus' Great Commission, interpreted incarnationally: "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn 20.21). Jesus' mission healed people's bodies and souls or whole lives, so should we. The Lausanne Covenant, with Escobar as majority world representative, reflects Stott's listening to the Latinos, with the largest paragraph, no. 5, on social responsibility. Yet in January 1975 Stott offered his friend Graham and the U.S. led and funded Lausanne committee, his resignation, because the covenant's mutual emphases on evangelism and social concern were unreflected in Graham's proposal for Lausanne's purely evangelistic ongoing work. Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: OUP, 2012).

15 Rene Padilla, "From Lausanne I to Lausanne III," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 5(2) (2010): 19–20 and C. René Padilla, "Evangelism and Social Responsibility: From Wheaton 66 to Wheaton 83," *Transformation* 2(3) (1985): 27–33.

16 Brian Stanley, "'Lausanne 1974': The Challenge of the Majority World to Northern-Hemisphere Evangelicalism," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 64(3) (2013): 533–51.



delegates being lay. The disturbing disjunction between professional, “sacred” mission and “secular” work was stark.

*Christianity Today* editor Harold Lindsell criticized both “the data-oriented church-growth school” from Fuller’s School of World Mission and “the discipleship-demanding compassion and justice group” for insensitivity to “evangelism that permeates society across a broad spectrum embracing ... all vocational pursuits.”<sup>17</sup> The latter is where Lausanne was leaning thirty years later. But much of the groundwork for integral mission and vocationally driven social concern, which would become so evident at Pattaya 2004, was needed first.

Stott signed the Radical Discipleship document and visited and consulted with the fledgling Latin American Theological Fraternity emerging from Lausanne. This lent credibility to integral/holistic mission. Lausanne’s Theology Working Group under Stott’s guidance held four consultations from 1977–82 applying paragraph 5 of its Covenant, that “evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty” to Gospel and Culture, Simple Lifestyle, and connecting social concern and evangelism. Donald McGavran’s Homogenous Unit Principle,<sup>18</sup> that “peoples become Christians fastest when least change of race or clan is involved,” was largely rejected.<sup>19</sup>

In *Understanding Church Growth* McGavran wrote that people “like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.”<sup>20</sup> Newbigin supported McGavran regarding not putting cultural barriers before prospective converts, but expected them to grow into a broader Christian inclusivity.<sup>21</sup> Newbigin drew for support on the soteriological, sociological and ethical principle of Galatians 3:27–28, that for those baptised into and clothed “in Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek, ... slave or free, ... male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

But within Lausanne: “The tension already present ... between the above balanced statement from paragraph 5 and the one-sided paragraph 6 that ‘in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary’ ... remained unresolved.” Paragraph 6 was highlighted in the related Pattaya World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) Consultation of 1980 on World Evangelization (COWE).

17 Harold Lindsell, “Spirit of Lausanne,” *Christianity Today* 18 (23) (30 Aug 1974).

18 “The Pasadena Consultation: Homogeneous Unit Principle”, [lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-1](http://lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-1). Accessed 27 July 2022.

19 Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God* (World Dominion Press, 1955), 23.

20 Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth, Revised and Edited by C. Peter Wagner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 198.

21 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*: (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 157–64.

It focused on unreached 'people groups,' homogeneous church growth, and primacy of gospel proclamation.

Another alternative "Statement of Concern on the Future of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization" asked it "to identify ... also social, economic, and political institutions that determine [people groups] lives and the structures behind them that hinder evangelism" and to encourage repentance regarding unjust structures.<sup>22</sup>

### 3 Diverging Evangelical and Ecumenical Missions: Pattaya and Melbourne

In examining missional and ethical traditions, it is important to remember historic missional antecedents for Lausanne and others. A small timeline (below) maps past conferences.

#### 3.1 *Edinburgh 1910—Lausanne 1974—Pattaya/Melbourne/Edinburgh 1980—Manila 1989—Pattaya 2004—Capetown 2010*


1980 marked 70 years since the 1910 Edinburgh Mission Conference with three major, but divergent missional conferences, in Edinburgh, Melbourne and Pattaya. Bosch sought to bridge global evangelical and ecumenical mission movements, participating in both Lausanne Congress and associated World Evangelical Alliance/Fellowship (WEA and WEF) events, while also serving the World Council of Churches (WCC). He was thus well placed to contrast Pattaya 1980's conference prioritizing Pauline based cross-cultural evangelism with the 1980 Melbourne WCC mission conference stressing ecumenical social concern and Jesus-based humanization, in simplified form.<sup>23</sup>

In 1982 at Lausanne's Grand Rapids Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Concern, Bosch felt supported by Croatian Peter Kuzmic's similar table but rejected contrasting post- (Already) and pre-Millennial (Not-Yet) eschatologies. The latter escapologies - emphasising escaping earth for heaven, exemplified what Bosch calls "indefensible" and "insidious" dualisms where "grace remains opposed to nature, justification to justice, the soul to the body, the individual to society, redemption to creation,

22 Andrew Kirk, *A New World Coming: A Fresh Look at the Gospel for Today* (Basingstoke UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), 148–51.

23 David J. Bosch, "Evangelism," *Mission Focus* 9 (4), 1981, 65–66, Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1



Melbourne—Ecumenical—WCC 1980	Pattaya—Evangelical—WEF 1980
Preferring Jesus language (Gospels)	Preferring Pauline language (Epistles)
Began with ‘human disorder’	Began with ‘God’s design’
Stressed Unity, not truth	Stressed truth, not unity
God revealed in contemporary experience also	God revealed in Jesus, Scripture, and Church
Emphasized the deed (orthopraxis)	Emphasized the word (orthodoxy)
Sees social concern as intrinsic to or all of mission	Sees social concern as separate from mission or a result of conversion
Judged social ethics as primary	Judged personal ethics as primary
Viewed sin as corporate	Viewed sin as exclusively individual
Equated mission with humanized social change	Equated mission with a call to conversion or church planting
Proclamation as supporting service	Proclamation as primary, birthing fellowship and service
Stressed liberation	Stressed justification and redemption
Heard the cry of the oppressed	Heard the cry of the lost
Considered humans from a positive creation perspective	Considered humans from a negative, fallen perspective
Denied clear boundaries between church and world, with the world setting the agenda	Affirmed clear boundaries between church and world with the church setting the agenda
Divided the world into rich and poor	Divided the world into ‘people groups’
Proclivity towards socialism	Proclivity towards capitalism
Highlighted Jesus’ human nature and universality	Highlighted Jesus’ divine nature and uniqueness

heaven to earth, the word to the deed, and evangelism to social responsibility.”<sup>24</sup> These dualisms also significantly discounted earthly work as vanity or transient as Ecclesiastes 1:2–3, 2:23–26, says. But even fleeting enjoyment from one’s toil is worthwhile in its time, and relationships Ecclesiastes 4:4–6, and

24 David J. Bosch, “In Search of a New Evangelical Understanding,” in *Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, edited by Bruce J. Nicholls (Paternoster: Lausanne Committee & World Evangelical Fellowship, 1985), 82; and “Evangelism,” 1981, 65–66; cf. Peter Kuzmic, “History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views,” in *Word and Deed*, 150.

Romans 8:19–25 adds the dimension of hope and glory making the subjection to futility/vanity, worthwhile.

Instead of vanishing into vanity, Bosch, sees mission as totally transformative world engagement. Mission includes word and deed, proclamation and presence, explication and example, God's saving deeds and church social action. Evangelism involves individual forgiveness, repentance, renewal, and incorporation as members of Christ's messianic community.

Grand Rapids' albeit limited prioritization of evangelism disturbed Bosch. He essentially agreed with Stott's wider definition of mission as God's total task for the church to seek the world's salvation. But he critiqued Stott's "separate but equal" approach of "Great Commission and Great Commandment" equals mission, or "evangelism+social action=mission" approach to resolving the Lausanne dilemma. To Bosch, Stott's approach allowed for dualistic separation, and maintained the *primacy* of evangelism. Instead, Bosch wrote of the "dimensions of the one, indivisible mission of the Church," the *missio Dei* "as ... the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God." For Bosch, Evangelicals who disconnect preaching from social issues were "trivializing God and [God's] salvation."<sup>25</sup> He saw Pattaya 1980 as the highpoint of such evangelistic primacy.

This evangelistic highpoint was replaced by a more integral, unprioritized relation with social transformation through the 1980s, evident in two WEF Ethics and Society conferences near London just before Pattaya, and in WEF's Wheaton 1983 Statement "Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need."<sup>26</sup> Yet WEF also stressed God's Kingdom as "the goal of transformation" or development. It provides, for Padilla, "the strongest affirmation of commitment to integral mission in the last quarter of the twentieth century" as it clearly "affirms that 'evil is not only in the human heart but also in social structures.'" The church's mission "includes *proclamation* of the gospel and its *demonstration*. We must therefore evangelize, respond to immediate human needs, and press for social transformation."<sup>27</sup>

Despite unresolved differences with Evangelicalism, Bosch saw some ecumenical movement also towards an integrationist position re-emphasizing proclamation alongside practising justice in WCC's 1982 Mission and

25 Bosch, "In Search," 79, citing John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon, 1975), 15–34.

26 David Parker, *"Discerning the Obedience of Faith": A Short History of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission* (Bonn: Culture and Science, 2014), 28.

27 Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Oxford: Regnum, 1987), 260, 254.

Evangelism (ME) document. This “Convergence of Convictions” or “Elements of an Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm” where evangelical ecumenism, and mainstream ecumenism move closer, leads to “Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox ... learning afresh ‘to overcome the old dichotomies between evangelism and social action.’ The ‘spiritual Gospel’ and ‘material Gospel’ were in Jesus one Gospel” (ME 33).<sup>28</sup> This is also key to affirming material work-life as we will see in Pattaya 2004’s Marketplace Ministry group.

#### 4 Missional Church or People of God?

A further significant ecclesiological and missiological question with implications for faith and work is the generally prioritized relationship of *ecclesia* or church over the *laos* or scattered people of God, and their work.<sup>29</sup> Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* proposes many postmodern missional paradigms including “Ministry by the Whole People of God”<sup>30</sup> (which others, including Catholics had developed leading up to and at Vatican II, and which Steve Taylor, Victoria Lorrimar and others note and develop creatively in this volume). For Bosch, mission is not the prerogative of passport-carrying professional missionaries crossing cultures. Rather, “the whole world is a mission field” and mission is an identity, of God and humans, and only then a task, for the whole church/*ekklesia*.<sup>31</sup>

Following fellow missional church statesman Newbigin, Bosch states that the *ekklesia* is not a *thiasos* or private religious cult, but the assembly of the Imperial Lord Jesus, the town-hall gathering of God’s coming city. It was “a *civil* concept ... launched into public life ... on a collision course with the established powers.”<sup>32</sup> Church or *ekklesia*, meaning ‘gathering,’ is meant to prepare the people of God for missional scattering or dispersion into the work-world. Instead of the default dominance of Church/gathering categories, compounding confusion between Church and work, we should tune into the oscillating

28 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (New York: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 416–18.

29 See Adler and Katoneene, “Laity” 661–662 on “Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community” from the 1991 WCC Canberra Assembly giving laity a “new profile” of participation in church and world “rediscovered after a long ... silence” when God’s scattered people were submerged by God’s gathered people.

30 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

31 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

32 Bosch, “In Search,” 80–81 citing Lesslie Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 47.

rhythm of the Christian week of public Sunday Church and Monday sacrificial worship<sup>33</sup> in body and mind, in missional/scattered contexts.

Through the 1980s there was little difference between Stott and Bosch regarding evangelism as “the inviting and *ingathering dimension of the total mission*” into the Church. Nor was there much difference between them regarding social service missional involvements. Bosch describes interchurch aid, social involvement, prophetic ministry, development, healing ministry as representing “the serving, self-emptying and humanizing dimension” and as important to the WCC Melbourne 1980, Canberra 1991 and later mission approach.

In practice, many such missional initiatives are supported by Stott’s book sales. These include: the global TEAR Fund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) development agency; LICC’s whole-life discipleship, culture and workplace focus; Langham Trust’s majority-world pastor training and literature institute; and the global *A’Rocha* ecological restoration ministry (close to bird-watcher Stott’s heart). Many of these inform his *Issues Facing Christians Today*.<sup>34</sup> His exertions in practice and print, often in that liberationist or praxis order, testify to the missionally integrated thought and heart of probably the leading global, Lausanne-type Evangelical, of the late twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

## 5 Lausanne II—Manila 1989: Two Great Mandates

Despite Bosch’s earlier criticism, Stott’s holistic emphasis on the “Great Commission and Great Commandment” equalling mission was incorporated into Lausanne Congress II in Manila (1989). Filipino Senator Jovito Salonga stated that “The time is past when we can build our own separate individual stairway to heaven, [what I call soul-itary confinement], away from the sufferings of our people.” Further, anti-Apartheid activist Caesar Molebatsi’s timely “Reaching the Oppressed” paper integrated global evangelistic and socio-political responsibility powerfully in Manila’s majority-world setting as dividing walls fell.<sup>36</sup>

33 Kara Martin, *Workshop: How to Use Your Work to Worship God* (Midview City, Singapore: Gracewing, 2017); *Workshop 2: How to Flourish at Work* (Midview City: Gracewing, 2018); Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B. Willson, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

34 John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today: A major appraisal of contemporary social and moral questions* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1984).

35 Stott, *Issues*: “The Biblical Basis for Social Concern,” 13–24.

36 *Transformation* 7 (January/March 1990): 25–27. Further, two-thirds world missionaries were now representing 35.9% of all missionaries in 1990 and rapidly rising. Larry D. Pate,

The Manila Manifesto no. 9 confirmed the Lausanne Covenant commitment to socio-political justice as essential to mission. The Manila Manifesto no. 19 stressed urgent outreach to the unreached. The revolutionary-sounding Manifesto concluded with Lausanne Covenant's affirmation that "God is calling the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world."<sup>37</sup>

Lausanne II affirmed the laity's work as obeying the Great Commandment and overflowing into social justice, but still mainly as a means to evangelism. This gospel utilitarianism largely repeated the subordination of social concern to evangelism, but in relation to workplace mission. Little attention was given to the intrinsic worthwhileness of work that most Christians do most of the time – fulfilling the creation commission (Genesis 1.26–28). This dualistic instrumentalism has historically led to a sacred, clericalized view of Christian mission as a privatized, residential, and recreational activity. Such means to an end dualism devalues secular and public arenas of life and livelihood, diminishes and externalizes motivation, and restricts the gospel's power to change.

Still, in stressing the ministry of "the whole church," the Manila Manifesto no. 6 noted that while some are called to be pastors, teachers and evangelists, they in turn are "to equip all God's people whose first responsibility is to be lay witnesses in the home and at work."<sup>38</sup>

Pragmatically, the workplace is where most Christians spend most of their waking lives and should most commend Christ in word and deed. As Pete Hammond, pioneer IVF U.S. Marketplace Ministry leader said, "This immobilization of 99 per cent of God's people is both unbiblical and discriminating, while making ... world evangelization impossible."<sup>39</sup>

But this was Hammond's astute, pragmatic accommodation to those prioritizing only the Great Commission, or partially seasoned, not marinated, by the Great Commandment. Lausanne II still lacked a fully trinitarian foundation in God's work, and commitment to the creation commission to rule over and care for the earth and for work, manual and/or mental, as holistic worship. It awaited a broader biblical and theological base from the emerging Marketplace Ministry stream in Pattaya 2004.

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"The Changing Balance in Global Mission" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (April 1991), 58.

37 Stanley, *Global Diffusion*, 178.

38 Lausanne Movement, "The Manila Manifesto," (1989), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/manifesto/the-manila-manifesto>.

39 Alan Nichols ed., *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World* (Charlotte, NC: LCWE and Regal, 1989), 117–18.

## 6 Correcting Pattaya 1980: Marketplace Ministry Pattaya Forum 2004

Fifteen years after Manila, and 24 years after the divisive Pattaya WEF Consultation over evangelistic prioritization in 1980, the Marketplace Ministry<sup>40</sup> Issue Group reminded the Pattaya Forum that Lausanne I in 1974 “gave us people groups, Lausanne II in Manila 1989 gave us the 10/40 Window. We ask now, will the Forum give us Marketplace Ministry among other essential mission tasks?”<sup>41</sup> The argument was that marketplace workers and witnesses were among the great forgotten people groups. Many marketplace mission-minded Christians now focus on the workplace “9 to 5 window.”<sup>42</sup>

Lausanne and the wider evangelical Marketplace movement are partly independent but related to the Holistic Mission, Tentmaking, and Business as Mission Issue Groups at Pattaya 2004. There is some overlap and dialogue, practically and theologically, though more is needed.<sup>43</sup> Holistic Mission foundationally “addresses the whole person within the world of creation” and redemption.<sup>44</sup> Tentmaking and Business as Mission focus more cross-culturally while Market/Workplace Ministry focuses more locally and nationally. Tentmaking traditionally sees work as a means to overseas entry and evangelistic mission. Rapidly growing Business as Mission members see business as both

40 ‘Marketplace Ministry’ terminology was popularised by Pete Hammond, 40 year plus leader of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) and Lausanne marketplace ministry from 1989–2003. See Pete Hammond, R. Paul Stevens, and Todd Svanoe, *The Marketplace Annotated Bibliography: A Christian Guide to Books on Work, Business Vocation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002); Preece et. al., *Marketplace Ministry*, 2–4. The term gradually changed to Workplace Ministry or Faith at Work by c. 2010.

41 Platform talk on “Minding the Gap Between Faith and Work” by Gordon Preece, at Pattaya Forum 2004. Note that the 10/40 Window was a term coined by Luis K. Bush for relatively underprivileged and religiously closed regions between longitudes 10 and 40, particularly Islamic, Hindu and Chinese groups. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/40\\_window](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/40_window).

42 Adapted from Bush’s 10–40 window above by Pentecostal marketplace pioneer Os Hillman, *The 9 to 5 Window: How Faith Can Transform the Workplace* (Ventura: Regal, 2005).

43 C. Neil Johnson saw much “confusion” and “rivalry” between and within various “camps.” “Transformation to, within and through the Marketplace,” in Luis K. Bush and Paul A. Cedar, eds, *Transformation: A Unifying Vision of the Church’s Mission* (Thailand: Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization, 2004), 68.

44 C. Rene Padilla, “Transforming Church and Mission,” 32–40; Howard A. Snyder, “Creation and Transformation: Salvation Means Creation Healed,” in Bush and Cedar, *Transformation*.



creation-care and kingdom mission, not a dualistic or subordinate means to evangelism.<sup>45</sup>

While I defended Stott earlier against Bosch's charge of dualism, the charge fits some others within the Lausanne and wider evangelical movements, leading to the Sunday–Monday gap highlighted at Pattaya 2004. This gap begins with an individualistic, dualistic and privatized misuse of Scripture. It has both western (e.g. Greek) and eastern (e.g. Indian) forms. This dualism infects the key doctrinal loci and inhibits full integration of faith and work:

Theological: God as unchangeable, immaterial Spirit versus changeable, material creation.

Anthropological: Humanity split into an unchangeable, immaterial spirit, soul or intellectual image versus a changeable and material body often confused with biblical “flesh.”

Christological: Jesus as divine Saviour of human souls but not a fully incarnate, embodied human engaged in the whole of earthly life as its servant Lord.

Ecclesiological: the church as a “ghettoized” sacred gathering fleeing corruption by a material work-world and minimizing the role of God's dispersed people in the world.

Eschatological: the last things as an “escapology” for souls from an evil, material earth to a spiritual heaven where we no longer work.<sup>46</sup>

In response to these dominant dualisms at the Pattaya 1980 Consultation, the Marketplace Ministry group at Pattaya 2004 saw the need for a broader trinitarian credal basis for unity concerning theology of work. Scripture's final authority, and the Lausanne Covenant under it were accepted. Yet both remained vexed texts, subject to significant theological controversy. In a similar situation, Reformation forefathers of evangelicals still accepted the first five ecumenical creeds. Today these continue to provide a balanced reading of Scripture and the triune God's creative, reconciling, and re-creative work as a

45 R. Paul Stevens, “The Marketplace: Mission Field or Mission?” *Crux*. XXXVII(3) (Sep. 2001): 7–16; “Business as Mission,” Lausanne Occasional Paper, (LOP 59),” 2004. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/business-mission-lop-59>. Accessed 23 October 2020.

46 Gordon Preece, *Marketplace Ministry*, Lausanne Occasional Paper No.40. Pattaya, Thailand (2004), 12. cf. Harvey M. Conn's cutting critique of Evangelical dualism, “The Mission of the Church,” in Carl E. Armerding edited *Evangelicals and Liberation* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 63–70 especially 68.

model for human work. This trinitarian work re-frames Evangelicalism's and Lausanne's agonized debates over evangelism versus social concern.

The Marketplace Ministry group saw these tensions, particularly concerning work, as partly due to various church groups favouring aspects of the different leading work of each trinitarian person (though all three cooperate in and complement each others' work). Instead, our group sought to draw on all of God's economic trinitarian work to provide a fuller view of human work and mission.<sup>47</sup>

This argument was framed within the developing Lausanne tradition. Looking ahead to Lausanne III in Capetown the question was asked: "If Lausanne I gave us the Great Commission (of the Son) and Lausanne II gave us the Great Commandment (of the Spirit), will Lausanne III correct the Great Omission and give us the Creation Commission (Genesis 1.26–28) of the Father and Creator?" Provocatively these three Great Commissions or mandates were claimed.<sup>48</sup>

In turn the creation or cultural commission gave universal scope to the work of evangelism and work(s)<sup>49</sup> of service in trinitarian mission. Christologically, it was the resurrected Jesus Christ, the true Son of God and Son of Man who in Matthew 28.16–20 fulfilled the creation commission of human dominion when he said: "all authority [cf. dominion] in heaven and earth has been given to me."<sup>50</sup> And it was Christ who proclaimed the "great" evangelistic, teaching and disciple-making commission, not only to reach every tribe, but every cultural sphere and workplace of creation.

Pneumatologically, the Holy Spirit is the Creator Spirit moving over the face of the waters bringing order from chaos (Gen. 1.2). The Spirit enables us to love God (Rom. 5.1–8) and others fruitfully (Gal. 5.22–26), fulfilling the Great

47 See Gordon R. Preece, *The Viability of the Vocation Tradition: A Trinitarian and Reformed Theology of Vocation* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellin, 1998) and *Marketplace Ministry*, 23–27.

48 Cf. Ranald Macaulay, "The Great Commissions." Cambridge Papers <https://www.jubilee-centre.org/cambridge-papers>. Accessed 27 July 2022. Macaulay, like me, counters the damaging clericalism of the widely quoted maxim of the influential Sydney Anglican Philip Jensen that ordinary work is only "to put food on the table and money in the plate." Macaulay responds: "Because evangelicalism has yet to discover and maintain a proper coherence between the two commissions ... either social activism has been promoted at the expense of the 'gospel priority,' or the Creation Mandate has been neglected."

49 I singularise "works" as "work" like David Prior, "The Ministry of Work," No. 1 in his series *Faith at Work: A biblical basis* (New Maldon: Centre for Marketplace Theology n.d.) to avoid reading Reformation disputes over salvation by indulgences/charitable works back into Paul. So, "we are what [God] has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good work, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph. 2.10).

50 Cf. Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1974), 164–65.

Commandment or third commission. The Spirit gives gifts for our work (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12), and renews humanity and our dominion, now in Christ and his Spirit, in a solidarity of suffering with a groaning, labouring, but ultimately 'good' new creation under Christ's headship (Rom. 8.18–30).

## 7 Missio Trinitas and the Transforming of Work

This trinitarian link to Bosch was missed at Pattaya 2004. In retrospective, it provides a connection with his missiology, although Bosch did not unpack it in terms of three commissions. His Godward stress on *missio Dei* was foundational, but would be better described as *missio Trinitatis*.<sup>51</sup> As Bosch wrote:

Mission derive[s] from the very nature of God ... in ... the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* has God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include ... [t]he Father, Son and the Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.... This constituted an important innovation.... Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.<sup>52</sup>

Anthropologically, platonic and dualistic Christianity and the compounding Enlightenment influence on Evangelicalism mistakenly internalize God's kingdom in the soul.<sup>53</sup> Such platonic and dualistic Christianity overlooks the body and body politic, privatizing pietistic ethics in the bedroom, not in the public office, boardroom and ballot-box.

But Bosch does not go to the other, monistic extreme. The missiological implication of a holistic anthropology for Bosch is that "the *missio Dei* purifies the church" from obsession with significant but particular issues or activities aimed at "conversion, church growth, the reign of God, economy, society, and

51 Cf. Amos Yong, "Pluralism, Secularism and Pentecost: Newbegin-ings for *Missio Trinitatis* in a New Century, in *The Gospel and Pluralism Today*, ed. Scott W. Sunquist and Amos Yong (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 147–70. Newbigin's trinitarian missiology is critical for workplace theology, see my chapter 18.

52 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389–390. Bosch was following Karl Barth's use of *missio Dei*.

53 Luke 17:21 is best translated not "the Kingdom of God is within you" (*NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985 with its explanation at p. 1574) but "the Kingdom of God is amongst you" (NRSV).

politics.” Instead we are to focus firstly on “the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus.”<sup>54</sup> Other issues can follow.

Bosch's New Testament oriented missiology is largely Luke-Acts based, with support from Paul and Matthew, but with little reference from John. Similarly, Jesus' holistic, socially transformative and liberating mission, most explicit in Luke, was increasingly stressed by Stott, influenced by the Latinos and increasingly evident in Lausanne influenced Evangelicalism. This holistic mission emphasis got Stott into hot water as old evangelism-social concern tensions re-surfaced at the 1981 Australian Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC) Consultation in Melbourne. More holistic Melbourne evangelicals and more conservative and dualistic Sydney evangelicals split when Stott spoke on Jesus' liberating Nazareth Manifesto in Luke 4 in terms of complete liberation, individual and social.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, just as Luke 4 could be a divisive factor for some concerning individual spiritual versus communal, holistic liberation, it links many evangelicals and ecumenicals like Bosch and the rapidly rising Pentecostals of the global South. For example, Miroslav Volf considers Luke 4's emphasis on healing in all embodied dimensions, from physical illness to economic liberation from poverty, to be a bridging factor between his own Pentecostal heritage and Liberation theology.<sup>56</sup> This could bear much fruit in global missional and workplace theology.

However, despite Bosch's trinitarian missiology, its more narrow New Testament and Christological base neglects the creation commission of Genesis 1:26–28 as the basis of workplace mission (albeit read in a trinitarian and Christological way). Neglect of the creation commission is surprising for a Dutch Reformed theologian.

Ecclesialogically and missiologically from Bosch's perspective, mission thus becomes a “ministry by the whole people of God.”<sup>57</sup> Bosch calls for a thoroughgoing theology of the laity, challenging both denominational clericalism and modernistic separation of public and private domains.<sup>58</sup> The public people of

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54 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 531–32.

55 John R.W. Stott, “Bible Study,” in *Agenda for a Biblical Church*, edited by Alan Nichols (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1981). My then senior minister, upon return to Sydney, told me that “John Stott is a dangerous man.”

56 Miroslav Volf, “Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Pentecostal and Liberation Theologies,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26.3 (Summer 1989): 447–67.

57 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

58 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 484.

God<sup>59</sup> embody God's missional and public presence in the world, including the world of work as part of the public vocation of God's people. The work Christians do is missional, not as individualistic vision nor heroic activism, even if worthy, but as part of belonging to God's people called into the *missio Trinitatis*.

So, we should pivot from an over-emphasis on ecclesial gathering. Rather the people of God (laos), gather on Sunday and scatter on Monday, equipped by the Word ministries (Ephesians 4.11–12) to serve/minister through all life-spheres. Over-enthusiastic references to the church at work are incorrect biblically,<sup>60</sup> scare defensive clergy pragmatically, and clericalize and supernaturalise workplace ministry.<sup>61</sup>

Finally and eschatologically, we will not exist endlessly in a work-less paradise, due to the alleged Ecclesiastes' verdict of "vanity" or no lasting value "under the sun" over earthly work. This is outmoded through our work's vindication by the resurrected Son or Lord's work (Romans 8.20; 1 Corinthians 15.58). God will redeem creation because "he has compassion on all he has made" (Ps. 145.9), "including ... all that we have made with what God first made ... within the great cultural mandate."<sup>62</sup>

In the new heavens and new earth, instead of greed, injustice and violence in local and global dimensions, from sharp practices at the market or supermarket, to massive distortions and inequities of international trade, we will have unalienated creative work (Isa 65. 17–25). While the world awaits judgement (2 Pet. 3:10), the image is of a fiery furnace purifying and transforming our work for the new heavens and new earth "in which justice is at home" (2 Pet. 3.11–13).

Even the non-personal creation will be "liberated from its bondage to decay," and "the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it [the Holy City, the New Jerusalem]" (Romans 8.21; Revelations 21.24)....

59 Cf. Gordon R. Preece, "The Public People of God: A Paradigm for Social Ethics," in *Spirit of Australia 11: Religion in Citizenship & National Life* (Hindmarsh: ATF, 2003), 164–98.

60 Graham A. Cole, "The Doctrine of the Church: Towards Conceptual Clarification," in *Church, Worship and the Local Congregation: Explorations 2*, edited by Barry G. Webb (Sydney: Anzea, 1987), 2–27 and "A Response" from Robert J. Doyle, 19–25.

61 Cf. Hillmann, "9 to 5." He cites businesses having paid spiritual-cultural-political warfare intercessors. Work itself becomes a means to other ends. Miroslav Volf's seminal *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: OUP, 1991), 102–5, 111 critiques this as more a supernatural, additive view of spiritual gifts at work, than an "interaction" model of creational talents and new creational gifts (112).

62 Ranald MacAulay, "The Great Commissions," Cambridge Papers. <https://www.jubilee-centre.org/cambridge-papers>, unnumbered, last page.

Hence Luther's famous remark: 'If I knew Jesus would return tomorrow I would plant a tree today.'" This is Reformational, biblical, and workplace Christianity.<sup>63</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

This chapter has traced preparatory discussions in the Lausanne Movement from 1974 to 2004. It has found a fledgling theology of workplace mission in ongoing Lausanne and WEA/WEF debates, particularly in Pattaya 1980, over relative priorities of social responsibility and evangelism, movements towards integral mission, and increasing prominence of radical two-thirds world evangelicals. These debates were later rehashed regarding the relative roles of social concern and evangelism in work and in how the creation commission and Christological Great Commission relate to each other.

Partly different understandings of the relationship between evangelism and social concern were also seen in two major missional leaders, Lausanne's John Stott and missional church leader David Bosch. With different backgrounds and temperaments, Stott more diplomatic, Bosch more overtly prophetic, they converged promisingly around the liberating person and message of Jesus, particularly in Luke 4. Such embodied liberation can forge future missional cooperation with Latin American (and South African) liberationists, ecumenical theologians, and the rising global Pentecostal tide. And it opens a way towards an integrated missional theology of work that includes the material dimension of life.

At Pattaya 2004, the Marketplace Ministry group sought to take the *Spiritus Creator* and Liberator seriously as one part of taking the *missio Trinitatis* seriously in the credal economy of God's creative, reconciliatory and re-creative work. God's work flows through each triune person into the three commissions following from their distinctive but unified work. Hence *missio Trinitatis* is a model for human work. It is also biblically, theologically and historically true to the trajectory of the Lausanne Movement over time. Finally, Stott, Bosch and Newbigin's growing convergence provides a possible paradigm of the mission of the people of God that could provide greater cooperation between the relatively independent faith and work and missional church movements, as we shall see in Ch. 18 where Newbigin is a key bridge-builder.

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63 MacAulay, "Commissions," unnumbered, last page.

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# **Igniting Mission in the Marketplace: Imagining Clergy and Laity at Work Together**

*W. Jay Moon*

## **Abstract**

Clergy and laity often bemoan the gaps between the church and the world as well as between the furnished clergy and laity. Unfortunately, practical solutions are not as clear as the problem. Entrepreneurial Church Planting (ECP) explores an innovative approach to ignite kingdom purpose in the marketplace and create pathways for God to engage people beyond the church walls. This chapter describes the way ECP leverages the networking and value creation provided by business in order to form communities of Christ-followers among unchurched people. Biblical, historical, and missiological support is sketched to guide ECP planters. Contemporary examples support a typology of church planters, yielding the insight that people who are typically suited for this approach are of four main types: Artist, the Social scientist, the Evangelist, and the Builder. These examples demonstrate the potential of ECP to provide a missiological approach to the marketplace. In addition, the examples provided by ECP pioneers give practical insight to all clergy and laity in order to help them reduce the gap between the clergy/laity and the church/world.

## **Keywords**

Entrepreneur – church planting – John Wesley – Fresh Expressions – business – marketplace – tentmaker – laity – bi-vocational – co-vocational

## **1 Introduction**

“If we can wake up Christians to live out their faith in the marketplace, we could transform the world!”<sup>1</sup> a businessman recently proclaimed. Through

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1 Personal conversation in June of 2020 with Craig Avery, who started the 210 Leaders for businesspeople in Kentucky. See: [210Leaders.com](http://210Leaders.com).

many similar conversations with people in their ‘secular jobs,’ I sense a growing desire (and frustration) among Christians to live out their faith in their daily jobs—they simply do not know how. Working as an engineer and businessman for several years, I too understand that tension between serving God in the marketplace and the church.

Clergy often recognize this tension as well. A church planting network leader recently confided in me, “Every pastor I know laments the sacred/secular divide that separates the work of the church from the lives of everyday people, but they simply do not know what to do about it.” Steve Taylor (chapter nine) described this by noting, “the minister is considered to be Sunday-focused, unable to relate to ‘life beyond Sunday.’”<sup>2</sup> While both the clergy and the laity recognize the lack of faith and work integration in the marketplace, they are equally at a loss for guidance how to do so. Serving as a teaching pastor in a local church plant, I also understand this tension between ministry in the church and the world.

### 1.1 *Two Gaps*

Jürgen Moltmann recognized these tensions as he lamented two large gaps in the church today—“the one inside the church which divides the clergy and the laity and the one outside which divides the church from the world.”<sup>3</sup> He proclaimed the need for a theology (and a practice I may add) that is no longer simply for priests and pastors but also “for the laity in their callings in the world. It will be directed not only toward divine service in the church, but also toward divine service in the everyday life of the world.”<sup>4</sup> Moltmann puts his finger on the two gaps that are felt by both the clergy and the laity. The question remains, “What examples guide the way forward to bridge these two gaps?”

David Bosch observed the historical gaps between the clergy/laity and church/world and noted that “we desperately need a theology of the laity—something of which only the first rudiments are now emerging.”<sup>5</sup> Bosch was hopeful that these gaps could be overcome and saw examples of lay ministry in the Roman Catholic small base communities. While Bosch provided few other

2 Steve Taylor, “Worship, Work and Witness: Action Research in a Local Church”, in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

3 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 11–12; cf. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 478–485.

4 Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, 11–12.

5 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 484.

specific examples of the way forward, he concluded: “we need a more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God.”<sup>6</sup> As predicted by Bosch, various “organic, less sacral” ecclesial forms have emerged that provide examples for us to learn from.

## 1.2 *Church in the World*

Adler and Katoneene recognize that these gaps did not exist in the early church until the third and particularly the fourth century when a clear distinction was made between the laity and the clergy. This led to the problem whereby “lay people are being defined by the lack of ordination, the lack of training and competence, and thus are seen as being secondary to the ordained members of the church.”<sup>7</sup> What could result if laity are not defined by what they lack (ordination, training, competence); instead, they are recognized by how they represent the church already in the world? Adler and Katoneene explain,<sup>8</sup>

The real battles of faith today are in factories and shops, offices and farms, in political parties, government agencies and countless homes; in the press, radio, televisions, and in the relationship between nations. It is often said that the church should go into these spheres, but the church is in fact already there. Laypeople are “those members of the church, both men and women, who earn their livelihood in a secular job and who, therefore, spend most of their working hours in a ‘worldly’ occupation.”

Instead of the laity being regarded as ‘second rate’ clergy then, the laity are already in the world as representatives of Christ. Thus, they are the church sent into the world as part of the *missio Dei*. How could the church recognize the important contributions that both the laity and clergy provide to ignite mission in the marketplace by working together?

One approach to bridge the gaps (inside and outside the church) and reignite mission in the marketplace is Entrepreneurial Church Planting (ECP), defined as entrepreneurial approaches to form communities of Christ-followers among unchurched people through businesses in the marketplace.<sup>9</sup> Entrepreneurial

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<sup>6</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 659.

<sup>8</sup> Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 659.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Long and W. Jay Moon, eds, *Entrepreneurial Church Planting: Innovative Approaches to Engage the Marketplace* (Nicholasville, KY: DOPS & GlossaHouse, 2018), 6.

church planters address the need to engage public society through the marketplace via entrepreneurial means. They either start new businesses or work within existing businesses to plant a church in their business venue. For example, to bridge the gap between those inside the church and those outside the church walls, why not plant churches in their normal gathering locations, such as coffee shops, cafes, pizza parlors and workout facilities? The end result is that the large outer gap between the church and the outside world is largely diminished. To plant these types of churches, why not empower the laity who are skilled business folks to work alongside the clergy? This large inner gap between the laity and the clergy then slowly dissipates.

These ECP ‘pioneers’ provide insight to guide clergy and laity as they seek to engage their faith in the marketplace. Since these ECP pastors have engaged deeply in both the marketplace and the church, they are in a position to provide insight that is lacking by those standing on either side of the gap. While the majority of Christians will not be called to plant ECPs, these church planters can guide both the laity and the clergy forward in the path ahead.

## 2 Entrepreneurial Church Planting as a Fresh Expression

Entrepreneurial church planters are one example of the Fresh Expressions movement.<sup>10</sup> Missiologist Michael Moynagh uses the term ‘new contextual churches’ to describe the Fresh Expression movement as:

Christian communities that serve people mainly outside the church, belong to their culture, make discipleship a priority and form a new church among the people they serve. They are a response to changes in society and to the new missional context that the church faces in the global North.<sup>11</sup>

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10 The Fresh Expressions movement started in the UK with the Anglican Church and quickly was adopted by the Methodist Church. Since then, it has spread globally as a “form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.” Only some of the Fresh Expressions engage the marketplace while others seek out other spaces. See Travis Collins, *From the Steeple to the Street: Innovating Mission and Ministry Through Fresh Expressions of Church* (Franklin, TN: Asbury Seedbed Publishing, 2016), 372. Kindle edition.

11 Michael Moynagh and Philip Harrold, *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice* (London: SCM, 2012), 103–106 Kindle.

ECPS focus on ‘more organic, less sacral’ ecclesial forms in the marketplace by asking three questions:

1. If large segments of the population will not come to the existing churches, no matter how excellent the preaching, building, or programs, then what are the needs or issues that are unmet in their lives?
2. Where are these unchurched people already gathering in the marketplace or what type of marketplace ventures would draw them?
3. How can the church empower entrepreneurs to form communities of Christ-followers in the marketplace through Christ honoring marketplace ventures?

### 3 The Basis for Entrepreneurial Church Planters

#### 3.1 *Biblical Precedent*

Just as Moltmann observed in contemporary western culture, the traditional church has found it challenging to penetrate the marketplace. Moynagh notes, “It is not easy for the church to form Christian lives in work, volunteering and leisure when the formation takes place some distance away. The teaching of practices at church may have a level of generality that fails to engage with the specifics of a person’s life.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, there are biblical examples of church plants amidst this network of relationships (where people spend the majority of their waking moments) called the marketplace.

The Apostle Paul provides helpful insight.<sup>13</sup> When Paul travelled to Philippi, he had a problem – there was no synagogue to visit (there needed to be at least ten Jewish males in a town to establish a synagogue). Since his normal custom upon entering a city was to visit the local synagogue and preach to those gathered there (Acts 17:2), Paul had no other play in his playbook. How could he bridge the outer gap between the church and the world when there was no synagogue?

Paul visited the river on the sabbath and encountered Lydia, a “dealer in purple cloth” (Acts 16.14). Once she responded to Paul’s message, Lydia and her whole household were baptized. Lydia then invited Paul and his companions to her home (Acts 16.15). Here is where the story really gets interesting. New Testament scholar Craig Keener notes, “multistory apartment buildings

<sup>12</sup> Moynagh and Harrold, *Church for Every Context*, 3885–6 Kindle.

<sup>13</sup> For further New Testament and Old Testament perspectives concerning faith and work integration, see Long and Moon, eds, *Entrepreneurial Church Planting*, 21–97.

with ground-floor workshops were common; a number of urban artisans lived onsite, sometimes in a mezzanine level above their ground-floor shops ... many sold from shops in their homes.”<sup>14</sup> Most likely then, Lydia’s workshop was on the lower floor while she lived in the upper story. Since her home and business place were likely connected, Paul was actually visiting Lydia’s business venue for an extended time of teaching and ministry. Paul then met this gathering of believers at Lydia’s home/business to encourage them prior to travelling on to Thessalonica (Acts 16.40). This was an entrepreneurial church plant.

When you think of Lydia’s work space (located in her home), do not think of a lonely individual dipping cloth into a vat of purple dye. Instead, think of a bee hive of activity. People were bringing dyes, fabrics, and other materials into the home. Others were taking the finished products and distributing them throughout the region. As Paul observed these supply chains and distribution networks, did a new paradigm emerge? Doug Paul calls this a kingdom innovation.<sup>15</sup> The Apostle Paul noticed that the marketplace provided fertile ground for connecting with people even when there was no synagogue available. It seems that Paul ‘stumbled’ upon this entrepreneurial church planting approach in Lydia’s business. As he travelled to Athens, Paul now had a new approach. The marketplace was fertile ground for bridging the outer wall between the church and world. Paul “reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17).

Paul then applied this more intentionally in Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila’s business.<sup>16</sup> Paul worked alongside Priscilla and Aquila as a tentmaker in Corinth, the political and economic center of Greece and the “transit point for all maritime trade between Rome and the prosperous Roman province of Asia.”<sup>17</sup> While the details of this tentmaking business venue are not clear, Craig

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14 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second edn. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 379.

15 Doug Paul, *Ready or Not: Kingdom Innovation for a Brave New World* (100mpublishing.com: 100 Movements, 2020).

16 While this is often referred to as simply a “house church,” it is so much more than that. It is particularly important for contemporary readers from the Global North to understand that the ancient home (and even in many contexts of the Global South today) was not a place of isolation from work; rather, it was often a beehive of activity that was a networking hub.

17 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second edn. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 379.

Keener speculates that Priscilla and Aquila lived on the floor above their artisan shop.<sup>18</sup>

The Apostle Paul's involvement in this business is often cited to support the business as mission movement. Perhaps even more significant, however, is the church that met in this business venue. In Romans 16.3–5 and I Corinthians 16.19, we discover that a church met at Priscilla and Aquila's home. This church was likely connected to their business, thereby making this a potent ECP team. In short, the church plant that resulted from this business practice eliminated the outer gap between the church and the world by placing the church in the very center of the marketplace. These tentmakers, turned church planters, also removed the inner gap between the clergy (Paul) and the laity (Priscilla and Aquila).

To take this one step further, Peyton Jones describes how this marketplace approach that Paul stumbled upon in Philippi (Acts 16), explored in Athens (Acts 17), and applied intentionally in Corinth (Acts 18) not only changed the trajectory of Paul's own ministry; it also affected how Paul trained and equipped fellow gospel workers like Timothy and Titus. Jones explains,

Paul expanded Priscilla and Aquila's business by training his fellow gospel workers, like Timothy, and Titus, thus franchising their tent-making business abroad, and with it, the gospel. Titus, Timothy, Silas, and Apollos were empowered to scratch out a living for themselves and bankroll their journeys to new cities with pop-up businesses in the form of a trade.<sup>19</sup>

While the early church movement is often described as a house church movement, it was actually a marketplace movement since many of the church gatherings were in business venues (located in homes) that resulted from marketplace engagement.

The Bible regularly and often speaks about the centrality of work in our lives; however, this is not often the topic of conversation from pulpits. For Mark Greene, "The 98 percent of Christians who are not in church-paid work

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18 Michael Moynagh noted that the house churches that sprang up in the wake of St. Paul's journey were often at the center of people's work. Moynagh describes that half of the homes excavated from the city of Pompeii had signs of work attached to them to document that people worked out of their homes in the first century. Work and home life were not separated as it is today. This was a presentation entitled "A Theology of Mission and Work," 2014 Fresh Expressions National Conference in the U.S. <https://vimeo.com/322941301/b8c2669789>. Accessed 11 June 2020.

19 Peyton Jones. *Church Plantology*, Exponential Series. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 364, Kindle Edition



are, on the whole, not equipped or envisioned for mission ... in 95 percent of their waking lives. What a tragic waste of human potential!"<sup>20</sup> What would it look like if 'normal' Christians were to realize God's calling for them to carry out their missional calling *in* the marketplace and not in spite of it? Instead of church planting strictly left to paid clergy, what might occur if entrepreneurs were awakened to their role as lay or bi-vocational church planters in the marketplace?

### 3.2 *Missiological and Historical Background*

Lesslie Newbigin<sup>21</sup> and the ensuing Missional church movement have pleaded for churches to regain their missional calling by finding their role in the *missio Dei*. Newbigin implores the church to:

Go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society.<sup>22</sup>

Entrepreneurial church planters heed Newbigin's call to engage public life by utilizing their entrepreneurial capacities in the marketplace. The resulting businesses and faithful communities of Christ-followers are to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom of God for the sake of those outside the walls of the existing church.<sup>23</sup>

20 Greg Forster, "Introduction: What Are People Made For?" In *The Pastor's Guide to Fruitful Work and Economic Wisdom*, eds. Greg Forster and Drew Cleveland (Grand Rapids, MI: Made to Flourish, 2012), 6.

21 To understand the significant contributions that Newbigin, John Stott, David Bosch, Darrell Guder and others had upon the Faith at Work and eventual Missional church movements, see chapters in this volume by Gordon Preece: "Transforming Faith and Work in Evangelicalism (and Ecumenism) 1974–2004" and "Newbigin Bridging Ecumenical and Evangelical Faith at Work and Missional Church Movements from 2000 on", in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

22 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 233.

23 The study of the mission of the church is beyond the scope of this chapter. In addition to Newbigin's works, see Darrell L Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Craig Ott, ed. *The Mission of*

Dallas Willard and Gary Black Jr. recognized the tremendous potential of engaging the business world:

What far too few either recognize or appreciate today are the opportunities available for spreading God's goodness, grace, and provision far and wide through the systems and distribution networks that exist as a direct result of industrial and commercial organizations and their professionals. Therefore the 'business world' is a critical aspect that cannot be overlooked and must be fully appreciated as vital in God's plan to overcome evil with good.<sup>24</sup>

While not being naïve about the potential for abuse in business, Willard and Gary Black Jr. the tremendous kingdom potential<sup>25</sup> through business done with integrity, honesty, and transparency:

Local businesspeople may be farther ahead in the ways of the kingdom than those leading a local church. Business is an amazingly effective means of delivering God's love to the world by loving, serving, and providing for one another. God loves the world (John 3:16), and because he does, he has arranged the enterprise and organization of business as a primary moving force to demonstrate this love throughout human history. Thus, the field of business and its unique knowledge fall perfectly into what can and should be understood as an essential realm of human activity that can and must come under the influence and control of God's benevolent reign.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, the history of the church does not reveal the clergy's enthusiasm for work in the marketplace.<sup>27</sup> To the contrary, the sacred, contemplative,

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*the Church: Five Views in Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016); Michael Frost, and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Revised & Updated (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), to name a few.

24 Dallas Willard and Gary Black Jr., *The Divine Conspiracy Continued: Fulfilling God's Kingdom on Earth* (New York: Harper One, 2014), 201.

25 Willard is not claiming that God is the author of the modern capitalist system; however, Willard recognizes the great missional potential for the church within this economic system.

26 Willard and Black, *Divine Conspiracy Continued*, 203.

27 There were notable exceptions of clergy that recognized the inherent value of work. For example, historian Chris Armstrong describes the examples of Gregory the Great (sixth

higher, perfected life of the clergy was often contrasted to the secular, active, lower, permitted life of the laity.<sup>28</sup> Over time the gaps gradually widened. Hence for Bosch, “For almost nineteen centuries and in virtually all ecclesiastical traditions ministry has been understood almost exclusively in terms of the service of ordained ministers.”<sup>29</sup> Gordon Preece (chapter six) notes that even with hundreds of ‘faith and work’ organizations worldwide today, the movement has largely left the church on the margins, if touched at all. At the same time, there have been notable exceptions whereby entrepreneurs successfully engaged in mission, resulting in the bridging of these gaps.

Space does not permit a review of these exemplars, including Celtic missionaries, the Benedictines, the Nestorians, Martin Luther, Matteo Ricci, the Moravians, John Wesley, and Hans Nielsen Hauge.<sup>30</sup> Some sketches of the Wesleyan movement will have to suffice.

John Wesley realized that there were large groups of people that were not coming to the church. Instead of waiting for them to come to the church, he realized the need to go where they were already working. Rather than expect people to clean up and come into the church, Wesley visited the marketplaces, brick yards and coal mines to bring the gospel to those who were unchurched:

His favorite venue for preaching was graveyards and marketplaces ... Markets were good because there was often a cross at the market. In eighteenth century England it was not unusual for a cross to be placed in the trading markets as a sign to remind people of the importance of honesty in public trade. So, Wesley could be outside in a very public place, and yet preach under a cross ... Wesley’s famous line, “All the world is my parish” is rooted in these new realities: Closed pulpits and their

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century) and Martin Luther (sixteenth century). See: Oikonomia Network, “Classic EWP Talk: ‘Vocation? Whatever!’ Some Helpful History,” November 3, 2020. <https://oikonomianetwork.org/2020/11/classic-ewp-talk-vocation-whatever-some-helpful-history/>. Accessed 11 June 2020.

28 This has been documented by several authors, such as: Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478–481; Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God’s Purpose for Your Life*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2018), 62–62.

29 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

30 These examples were selected from: Samuel Lee, “Historical Perspective in Entrepreneurial Church Planting,” in *Entrepreneurial Church Planting: Missiology in the Marketplace* (Nicholasville, KY: DOPS & GlossaHouse, 2018), 101–119.

decision to move beyond formal parish lines to embrace a rather bold ecclesiology.<sup>31</sup>

While hesitant at first, Wesley noted that the practice of going to the marketplace with the gospel resulted in a movement, gathering communities of Christ-followers among unchurched people in the marketplace. Wesley's own publishing business<sup>32</sup> (yes, he was a businessman and theologian!) earned a profit that is estimated at four to five million dollars in today's money.<sup>33</sup> He realized the great good<sup>34</sup> that this business profit could provide in his sermon on The Use of Money:

In the hands of his children, it [money] is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked: It gives to the traveller and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defence for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!<sup>35</sup>

31 Timothy Tennent, "Homiletical Theology" (Opening Convocation Address, Asbury Theological Seminary, September 2016), <http://timothytennent.com/2016/09/13/my-2016-opening-convocation-address-homiletical-theology/>. Accessed 30 October 2020.

32 For a further description of Wesley's views on business and entrepreneurship (that he encouraged in the church to alleviate poverty), see: W. Jay Moon, Ban Cho, Nick Bettis, "John Wesley, Compassionate Entrepreneur: A Wesleyan View of Business and Entrepreneurship", *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 38(2): 105–123, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/02653788211004644>.

33 David Wright, *How God Makes the World a Better Place: A Wesleyan Primer on Faith, Work, and Economic Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2012).

34 As a businessman and theologian, Wesley was not naïve about the potential harm of wealth. Wesley saw the good and bad, yet was willing to explore this potential for kingdom benefit. Theologians that I have talked with that have personally owned their own business often have a very different perspective on profit, markets, and the general potential for businesses to create flourishing societies than those who have not owned a business.

35 Wesley's sermons are available at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-theological-topic/>. Accessed 30 October 2020. Several of his sermons dealt with topics related to money, including: Sermon 87 - The Danger Of Riches 1 Timothy 6.9; Sermon 112 - The Rich Man And Lazarus Luke 16.31; Sermon 50 - The Use Of Money Luke 16.9; Sermon 51 - The Good Steward Luke 21.2; Sermon 108 - On Riches Matthew 19.24; Sermon 126 - On The Danger Of Increasing Riches Psalms 62.10.

Reflecting on the missional significance of business and money in the marketplace, Wesley concluded “It is therefore of the highest concern that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent; that they be instructed how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree.”<sup>36</sup>

Entrepreneurial church planters take up Wesley’s challenge, as they seek to employ their business ability and connections to form Christ following communities that meet in businesses in the marketplace. The spark generated by Wesley’s entrepreneurial spirit eventually spread like a wildfire on the American frontier as Methodist circuit riders travelled to locations where pioneers lived and worked. Instead of waiting for pioneers to come to the existing churches, circuit riders preached at local gathering spots to form communities of Christ-followers.

Eighteenth-century conference minutes listed the preaching places precisely. Sites included taverns, cabins, stores, poorhouses, forts, barns, woodland clearings and riverboats. On one occasion, a circuit rider preached in a gambling house. A layperson said, “In Jesus’ time some made the house of God a den of thieves, but now the Methodists have changed a den of thieves into a house of God” ... By the mid-1800s, American Methodism had become by far the largest and most spiritually influential religious body in the nation.<sup>37</sup>

The parallels between the eighteenth-century Methodist circuit riders and twenty-first century entrepreneurial church planters are compelling. Both saw their missional calling and were willing to engage the locations where people outside the existing church were gathering to bridge the ‘outer gap’ separating the church from the world. Both were pioneers, willing to take risks in the marketplace so that the church could fulfill her role as a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the kingdom of God. Both recognized the potential of lay-led entrepreneurial experiments and decided to employ their talents for the kingdom of God, thereby spanning the ‘inner gap’ between the clergy and laity. Is it possible that entrepreneurial church planters are the twenty-first century equivalent of the eighteenth-century Methodist circuit riders with the potential to once again transform our spiritual landscape? A few contemporary examples illustrate the possibilities.

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36 Wesley, *Use of Money* sermon.

37 Kenneth Kinghorn, “Offer Them Christ,” *The Asbury Herald* 117(1) (2007), 13.

#### 4 Contemporary Examples of ECP Churches and Planters

There are many examples of these twenty-first century ‘circuit riders’ called entrepreneurial church planters.<sup>38</sup> Four sketches are provided to illustrate a proposed paradigm of the type of church planters suited to this approach.

Entrepreneur and educator Michael Goldsby developed a paradigm to describe the characteristics of entrepreneurs.<sup>39</sup> Contrary to the popular stereotype, many entrepreneurs are *not* highly caffeinated, Type A, aggressive, extroverted, or lone ranger personalities. After studying many entrepreneurs, Goldsby noted that entrepreneurs were different from others in the way they received new information and in the way they then acted on that information. Goldsby outlined four different types of entrepreneurs, which I have modified to describe entrepreneurial church planters<sup>40</sup> in Figure 7.1.

##### 4.1 Artist (*Abstract Explorer*)

The artist type of entrepreneurial church planter gathers abstract information such as preferences, values, ideals, aspirations, and dreams. Once they receive this information, they explore new ideas and possibilities. Chris Sorenson is an example of an artist entrepreneurial church planter that planted the Camp House in Chattanooga, TN.<sup>41</sup>

The Camp House is a coffee shop and café that serves high-quality coffee and food throughout the day and entertainment with a cover charge each night. Sitting at one of the tables scattered throughout the building on a Saturday evening, I enjoyed local musicians along with 50–75 people, largely

38 There is a growing ECP movement across the U.S. and throughout the world. Several networks are promoting this ECP approach, such as Exponential, Leadership Network, Mosaix, and Fresh Expressions. The U.S. Director of Fresh Expressions shared with me that over 100 Fresh Expression churches have been started in the last few years in the United States alone.

39 Michael Goldsby, *The Entrepreneur's Tool Kit*, CD, The Great Courses (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2014).

40 Bill Bolton and John Thompson define an entrepreneur as “a person who habitually creates and innovates to build something of recognized value around perceived opportunities” in *Entrepreneurs: Talent, Temperament, Technique* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 2000), 5. Drawing on Bolton and Thompson, Michael Volland suggests a ministerial definition of entrepreneur as “a visionary who, in partnership with God and others, challenges the status quo by energetically creating and innovating in order to shape something of kingdom value.” Michael Volland, *The Minister as Entrepreneur: Leading and Growing the Church in an Age of Rapid Change* (London: SPCK: 2015), 3. In this chapter, the term entrepreneur is defined in the way that Volland envisions.

41 For more information, see <http://thecamphouse.com/>. Accessed 30 October 2020.

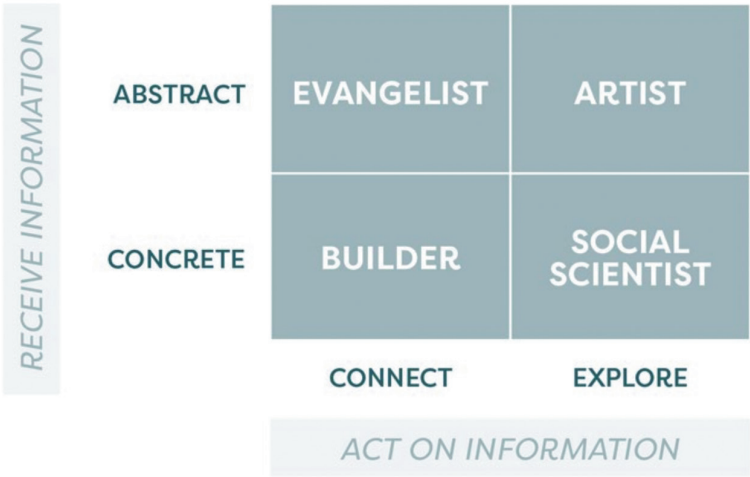


FIGURE 7.1 Types of entrepreneurial church planters  
SOURCE: AFTER GOLDSBY, *THE ENTREPRENEUR’S TOOL KIT* (2014)

millennials. The lighting near the coffee bar reflected a more contemporary appeal while the lighting and artwork become more ‘ancient’ as you move closer to the stage, which displayed a Byzantine mosaic in the background. This artistic expression of the ‘ancient-future’ church motivated Chris and the church planting team.

On Sunday morning, the tables were moved to the side and rows of chairs were arranged to accommodate the 150 people or so that attended the Anglican worship service in front of the mosaic. This ECP has now replicated itself in two other coffee shops in Chattanooga with further expansion plans already in the works.<sup>42</sup>

4.2 Social Scientist (Concrete Explorer)

The social scientist type of entrepreneurial church planter gathers concrete information such as facts, figures, and demographics but then utilizes that information to explore possibilities with other people and places.

Joonsik Choi observed that many poor Koreans, immigrant families, and single parent families lived in Siheung, South Korea.<sup>43</sup> Since many had a negative image of the traditional church, he decided that a restaurant that sold

42 <http://mchatt.org/>. Accessed 30 October 2020.  
43 Sang Rak Joo, *Entrepreneurial Church Planting (ECP) as a model of Fresh Expressions in South Korean context: Case studies exploring relationships between church planting and social capital*. PhD Dissertation (Wilmore, KY: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2017), 65–72.

inexpensive food would draw people together. The *Odukio Bunsikjeom* (inexpensive Korean Restaurant) church was born to “become a mission station by communicating with the public society through business.”<sup>44</sup> Many of the people that come to the restaurant during the week (particularly children) attend his evangelistic service on Fridays as well as gather in the restaurant for their church service.

#### 4.3 *Evangelist (Abstract Connector)*

The evangelist gathers abstract information such as preferences, values, ideals, aspirations, and dreams (like the artist). Where the evangelist differs from the artist, though, is that the evangelist uses this information to connect people to one another.

Paul Unsworth in London, England noticed that twenty thousand people a day walked down his street each weekend, yet there was no vital Christian witness.<sup>45</sup> Many were indifferent to the gospel but open to finding a sense of community. How could he gain access to this large network of people and lead them to Jesus? His response was to open the Kahaila coffee/dessert shop. This has resulted in a church plant that also meets in the same building on Wednesday nights. He is motivated by a missional impulse to connect with the unchurched. Unsworth shared:

I have had more spiritual conversations with people in a week than I had in working in a church for a whole year ... people that don't know anything about Jesus. We need to create opportunities to genuinely listen to people. In time, they will be interested in what I believe. Church is more than a service on a Sunday. Church is a spiritual family that comes together to redeem the lost.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.4 *Builder (Concrete Connector)*

The builder gathers concrete information such as facts, figures, and demographics (like the social scientist). The builder differs from the social scientist, though, in that the builder uses this information to connect people and places together.

Kofi lives in a heavily Muslim-influenced city in Ghana, West Africa.<sup>47</sup> Recognizing the needs in the community, he started several businesses including a

44 Joonsik Choi, *Odukio Story* (Seoul, South Korea: Dudrim, 2015), 19–20.

45 Based on a conversation with Paul Unsworth at the Kahaila coffee shop in January 2019.

46 Baptist Union GB, “Kahaila,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TomQ-TOmAzI>. Accessed 30 October 2020.

47 The name and city location are confidential for security reasons.



hotel, shea butter processing station, and cashew farm to engage with Muslims. He found that Muslims actually respect Christians who do good honest business. He has planted several churches, with the hotel becoming a church venue on Sunday mornings, as well as a prayer location during the week. He explains that the money for Christian ministry to Muslims comes from Muslims who patronize his businesses!

## 5 Broader Insights from ECP Examples

Not every Christian is called to this type of pioneering church planting effort. Since these ECP planters have themselves bridged the gaps between the church/world and clergy/laity, however, their experiences can provide broad insight for the rest of us. Their insights can inspire renewed imagination and hope for both clergy and laity trying to bridge the gaps.

### 5.1 *Outer Gap*

The ECP planters recognize a profound insight about the outer gap between the church and world. When ‘not yet believers’ first meet the church planter in the marketplace, they form their opinion of the planter based on their service in the marketplace. In the marketplace, people are looking for honest people that they can trust to do business with and enter into fair exchange. This first encounter then provides an imprint for how that ‘not yet believer’ views the character and integrity of the church planter. In a sense, the marketplace provides a level ground to evaluate each other on neutral turf. Pastor Kofi commented how Muslims like to do business with him due to his honesty and integrity! This marketplace venue provides a level ground for him to engage Muslims in a way that most pastors only dream of.

Contrast this with how a ‘not yet believer’ first encounters a pastor in the church. This is now the pastor’s turf, replete with theological language and symbols. A different defensive posture can emerge for the visitor since this is no longer neutral ground. Consider how Paul Unsworth had few meaningful conversations with ‘not yet believers’ in London while working in his church compared to the coffee/dessert shop. The shop simply provided a level playing field for listening and engaging.

The implications for clergy including finding opportunities where people first meet you in the marketplace (instead of the church building). Instead of developing programs that attract people to the church building, go outside the church building to engage people. This provides a more level playing field for listening that can lead to honest faith discussions—as the Apostle Paul realized in his first encounter with Lydia. Consider working alongside someone

that has a business or start one on your own. Eventually, this may even change the pastor's attitude about the marketplace. I have observed that theologians often have a very different attitude about the free market economic system based on whether they have owned and operated a business. For those that have done so, they often appreciate the jobs that are created, the lives that are blessed through meaningful work, and the engagement with people outside the church.<sup>48</sup> ECP pastors are showing clergy how to take the lead in crossing the outer gap between the church and the world.

## 5.2 *Inner Gap*

ECP planters once again provide insight into the inner gap between the clergy and laity. Each of the ECP planters describe their vocation as part of their calling. They do not divide vocation between sacred and secular or clergy and laity; rather, both are held in tension. Os Guinness explained the difference between a primary calling and secondary callings:

Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God) ... Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him ... They are our personal answer to God's address, our response to God's summons.<sup>49</sup>

Each of the ECP planters understood their primary calling to God as well as their secondary callings that are lived in faithfulness to God. They discovered that their secondary calling in the marketplace was simply an expression of their primary calling to God.

Formerly, a common term for this approach was bi-vocational. The implication was that the secular job was temporary and not of their own choice. A bi-vocational worker's secular job was necessary to pay the bills (even though they would rather be in full-time ministry) and they would leave the job once the church could afford to pay their salary. The term co-vocational has been

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48 The author both appreciates the strengths, and critiques the weaknesses, of the free market system. Drawing upon John Wesley's advice (among others), see precautions for ECP planters in: W. Jay Moon, "Characteristics of Entrepreneurial Church Planters," in *Entrepreneurial Church Planting: Engaging Business and Mission for Marketplace Transformation*, eds. W. Frederick Long and Jay Moon (Nicholasville, KY: Digi Books and GlosaHouse, 2018), 121–137.

49 Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2018), 61.

offered to describe the ECP experience whereby the secular job is more permanent and volitional.<sup>50</sup> Co-vocational workers choose to remain in this job even if the church could afford their salary since the ECP provides missional opportunities in the communities. For example, an ECP that formed as a result of a tech start-up found that the business addressed some of the most pressing needs for jobs in the city. As a result, the pastors did not want to leave their work for ‘full-time pastoring’; otherwise, this would remove them from the very context to influence the surrounding culture.<sup>51</sup>

Consider the implications for the laity: The term ‘co-vocational’ affirms that the work done in various venues can fulfill God’s calling upon their lives. Your secondary calling should be an outworking of your primary calling to love God. When laity see the pastors fulfilling their co-vocational callings in a coffee shop, hotel, or restaurant, this sends a strong message to the laity about finding their own sense of calling fulfilled in the marketplace as well. A Christian hotel cleaner recently confided in me, “When I clean this room, I think about the person that will enter here and I want to clean it in a way that they feel at home. In addition, I want to bless God by doing my best effort with what God has given me.” This is a beautiful expression of the Great Commandment—to love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. In short, the concept of being co-vocational applies to the laity as well as the clergy such that the gap between the two is diminished.

## 6 Further Reduction of the Gaps

This chapter recommends church planters consider the potential of the marketplace to lower the outer gap between the church and world by authentic relationships through mutual exchange in the marketplace. I am not suggesting that churches should be operated as businesses but that businesses can be operated with a focus on the church. ECPs must have a double bottom line: missional purpose *and* financial viability. I am not encouraging one vs. the other. If there is not a missional purpose, then ECPs can devolve into a business that does not seek to worship God. If ECPs are not financially viable, then they will not last. By focusing on both missional purpose and financial viability, ECPs

50 Brad Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting: Aligning Your Marketplace Calling & the Mission of God* (Alpharetta, GA: SEND, 2018).

51 Samuel Lee, “Can We Measure the Success and Effectiveness of Entrepreneurial Church Planting?,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40(4) (October 2016): 327–45.

will likely open new possibilities for church planters, to further break down the outer and inner gaps, to include team and ecclesiastical innovation.

### 6.1 *Teams*

ECPs have the potential to energize and engage laity in the church who did not see their vital role in the kingdom beforehand. Chris Sorenson, planter of the Camp House, confided in me, “If I had to do this church plant all over again, the first person that I would hire would be an accountant!” How many accountants in the church presently see their vital role in using their skills in the mission of God? ECP can energize the ‘secular professionals’ in the church so that they now recognize their vital role in church planting.<sup>52</sup> This can further reduce the clergy–laity gap.

### 6.2 *Ecclesiastical Innovation*

The laity and clergy together can further reduce the outer church/world gap by collaborating on innovative approaches for the church in the marketplace. While care has to be taken to ensure the church’s fidelity to her identity, the mission of the church requires a deep engagement with the surrounding culture, including the vast network of relationships called the marketplace. Rooted in biblical, historical, and missiological traditions, our contemporary contexts beg for innovation to reach the unchurched and dechurched.<sup>53</sup> One church, describing the qualifications for their next Fresh Expressions leader, said they are looking for someone who will “manifest behaviors of a creative, entrepreneurial leader. They will not settle for simply managing ministry.” This church has realized that “creativity becomes, in essence, a primary form of human currency. It will not (just) be those that lack money who will be unable to navigate the future, but those who lack creativity as well”.<sup>54</sup>

### 6.3 *Adjacent Possible*

Steve Johnson observed that innovations often arise through what he calls the “adjacent possible.”<sup>55</sup> This term describes what happens when people from

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52 Consider the vital fields that businesses engage that can now be energized to fulfill their missional calling, such as finance, accounting, management, marketing, to name a few.

53 Gregory L Jones calls this “traditioned innovation” in his *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2016).

54 Harris and Bergmann. “Beyond Boredom: Being Human in a Post-Work World”, in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

55 Steven Johnson. *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010).

disparate areas come together (become adjacent) and new possibilities arise that they would not have considered otherwise. Innovation often arises from people coming together instead of staying apart and simply thinking harder. The two gaps we are discussing have been widening for too long. For the church to bridge the inner and outer gaps then, new possibilities can emerge as people become adjacent to those who are already experimenting and innovating with these new forms of church. There is a growing network of ECP planters and materials developed to help clergy and laity bridge the gaps together.<sup>56</sup> In addition to the four examples above, I am aware of creative entrepreneurs who have collaborated with church planters to plant ECP's in workout facilities, bakeries, barber shops and other venues. The possibilities are endless. A way forward is likely through more "adjacent possible" opportunities involving the laity and clergy.

## 7 Conclusion

After serving the Anglican Church in the UK for many years, retired Bishop Graham Cray concluded, "The long-established ways of doing church are working less and less."<sup>57</sup> As a result, he was instrumental in forming the Fresh Expressions movement, of which ECP is one example.<sup>58</sup> ECP pioneers are diminishing the inner gap between the clergy and laity as well as the outer gap between the church and world. Even more significant, their experiences provide insights that apply beyond their churches. All clergy are encouraged to take initiatives beyond the walls of the church. All laity are encouraged to embrace their own co-vocational callings.

ECP is an approach that fulfils Bosch's vision for a more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God. In addition, ECP helps the church understand Adler and Kantoneene's call to not define the laity by what they lack (ordination, training, competence); instead, recognize how they represent the church already in the world.

Abraham Kuyper famously claimed: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all,

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56 Asbury Theological Seminary gathers and offers coaching to ECP's. An example of a resource providing directions and caution is: W. Jay Moon. *Missional Vibrancy and Financial Viability: Alternative Financial Models for Churches and Church Plants When Tithes and Offerings Are Not Enough* (Orlando, FL: Exponential, 2021).

57 Personal conversation with Graham Cray in York, England, January 2017.

58 ECP is a subset of Fresh Expressions, since not every Fresh Expression is engaged in the marketplace, though some are.

does not cry, Mine!”<sup>59</sup> Entrepreneurial church planters attempt to live out this bold assertion by planting churches in the marketplace. Jesus stands in the marketplace beside the gap inside the church between the clergy/laity as well as the gap outside the church between the church/world and declares, ‘Mine!’

### Acknowledgments

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# Worship, Work and Witness: Action Research in a Local Church

*Steve Taylor*

## Abstract

David Bosch claimed that ministry by the whole people of God is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today. What might this mean for local congregations who seek to embody *missio Dei*? This chapter describes an action research project in a local church seeking to integrate worship, work and witness. Practices of gathered public prayer, scattered weekday prayer resources and conversational formation are analyzed using *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church) and *ecclesia discens* (the learning church) as categories. What results is an understanding of the Great Commission as baptizing into the fullness of vocational life, learning together (*ecclesia discens*) to obey everything that God as creator, redeemer, sustainer commands in *missio Dei*. Hence the chapter resources faith-full work witness to shed light on practices that encourage Transforming of work. In the process, the hermeneutics by which *missio Dei* is understood as learning not teaching in resourcing the local church faith-full witness in all of life beyond Sunday are clarified.

## Keywords

Action research – *ecclesia docens* – *ecclesia discens* – Great Commission – *missio Dei* – learning

## 1 Life Beyond Sunday: Action Research in a Local Church

“So you are like us. You have a life beyond Sunday.” In 2003, after nine months in a new church, a passing comment by a Church Board member offered some interesting reflection on ministerial identity and the nature of the church. In accepting a call as Senior Pastor, Opawa Baptist Church, Christchurch, I had insisted on being bi-vocational. Serving 60 per cent as minister and 40 per cent

in a seminary, I hoped to encourage a team approach to ministry, offering a greater range of gifts among this local body of Christ.

In this snippet of conversation, several themes central to this volume are articulated. A set of understandings about lay and ordained ministry are evident. The minister is considered to be Sunday-focused, unable to relate to “life beyond Sunday.” What the minister knows about Christianity, shared on a Sunday, seems to have little applicability for ‘life beyond’ the particular setting of gathered worship.<sup>1</sup> Work is perceived as a domain separate, distinct and removed from the Christian faith proclaimed on Sunday. These perceptions present challenges to the other three themes central to this volume. What might it mean for a local church to participate in *missio Dei*? What spiritual disciplines, including prayer, listening, and discernment, might help form a church in the world? What might a journey of change, a journey that leads to deeper maturation in the ministry and mission of the whole people of God, look like?

This chapter uses the local church as a focal lens to examine these various themes. A form of action research in a local church over six years explored what it meant for the whole people of God to participate in the *missio Dei* in places of work, leisure and life beyond Sunday. Three sites of ecclesial life are examined: gathered Sunday prayer, scattered weekday prayer resources, and conversational formation in communal discernment. How these spiritual disciplines nurture faith beyond Sunday is outlined. The action research case study provides hope, as it describes a journey of change and the maturation of the workplace witness of members of a local church over time. The argument is that a learning posture of *ecclesia discens* is essential to the faith-full work witness of a local church community.

## 2 The Reforming of Faith and Work

The witness of the whole people of God beyond Sunday requires accurate understandings, including God’s activity in all of life, the grounding role of the contextualizing congregation, and the nature of God’s people as *ecclesia discens*, a listening community.

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1 “Formal religious worship tends to take place in particular times and places, rather than being available as a 24/7 spirituality to match our 24/7 lifestyles.” Olive Fleming Drane, *Spirituality to Go: Rituals and Reflections for Everyday Living* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 5.

A distinctive feature of Christian spirituality is a rightly ordered understanding of God as active in all of life. Alister McGrath pointed to the reforming of the secular as a feature of the Reformation.<sup>2</sup> There was no difference in God's eyes between washing dishes or preaching from Scripture. For reformers, the "real vocation of a Christian lay in serving God in the world."<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther asserted that "household chores are more to be valued than all the works of monks and nuns."<sup>4</sup> Following the reforms of Vatican 2, John Paul II argued that the church must "form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God ... Jesus belongs to the 'working world' ... everyone who is called to follow Christ with the possibility of sharing lovingly in the work that Christ came to do."<sup>5</sup> Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann argues that the Old Testament provides a range of imaginations regarding the relationship between church and society.<sup>6</sup> Among five Old Testament passages, Brueggemann argues that the Mosaic code is an example of a reformationist approach to church and society. The building of cities of refuge in Deuteronomy 19.1–10 is public hospitality, in which systems of justice and infrastructure are aligned in establishing justice. This invites a wide range of individual occupations to understand themselves as participating in God's mission of justice-making. How might the local church in worship and witness participate in these dimensions of *missio Dei*?

Understanding the vital and grounding role of the local church as a contextualizing congregation is also necessary. Historic understandings of mission suggest that mission occurs at a distance, 'over there,' in exotic locations. Specific individuals uniquely called, and gifted are sent. Local church involvement is reduced to activities like prayer, financial giving and sending care packages (complete with used tea bags!). These historical attitudes to mission present significant challenges for the everyday life of faith and work. Work is reduced to an extractive activity, a way to earn funds to support mission or a place to

2 Alister McGrath, *Christian History: An Introduction* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 169.

3 McGrath, *Christian History*, 254.

4 McGrath, *Christian History*, 169. For another engagement with Martin Luther's sanctification of the ordinary in this volume, see Xiao Li, "Towards a Grassroots Missiology: Case Studies of *Missio Dei* in the Streets of East Asia". In *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

5 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens: Elements for a Spirituality of Work*. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html), 24. Accessed 25 May 2018.

6 Walter Brueggemann, "The Bible and Mission: Some Interdisciplinary Implications for Teaching," *Missiology* 10 (1989): 397–412.

evangelize. There is no imagination to conceive of the workplace as a *missio Dei* participation.

Hence *missio Dei* challenges local churches in relation to their missiological practices. *Missio Dei* is considered one of the most essential theological (re-) discoveries of the twentieth century. God is a missionary God at work in the world. Hence, mission is sourced and located not with the church, but with God. The church is to be an instrument and witness to the gospel, not the end-point of the gospel.<sup>7</sup> Hence the church is not static, provincial, or bureaucratic. This has particular challenges for local churches in Western cultures. For Alan Roxburgh, a theology of *missio Dei* requires a 'contextualizing congregation', one able to 'listen' and 'see' where God is at work amid secularism, pluralism and technological transformation.<sup>8</sup> Teresa Okure argues that when mission focuses on commission, the result is "a complacency on the part of first-world Christians, a complacency that has led in many cases to the loss of faith itself among Christians in this first world."<sup>9</sup> Okure argues that in John 4:34, the Father is both "the owner and initiator of the mission" and is actively present in the unfolding of the mission.<sup>10</sup> Hence human participation, including the integrating of faith beyond Sunday, involves being open to God's activity. Mission is local and requires paying attention to where the Father actively abiding, is Jesus uniquely participating, and the Spirit is breathing peace.

Gorman draws on Okure, locating *missio Dei* as formational and missionary and reflecting on *missio Dei* in specific local communities as "part of the process of participating in, discerning, and further participating in the *missio Dei*."<sup>11</sup> As illustrative of the local community as both formational and missionary: "The community's own mission is inevitably, and inextricably, both centripetal and centrifugal, internally and externally oriented, each dimension of mission leading to the other in an unending back-and-forth, a missional circle comparable to a hermeneutical circle or spiral."<sup>12</sup> This invites reflection on the

7 Darrell Guder, *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4.

8 Alan Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 69.

9 Teresa Okure, "Jesus and Mary Magdalene." In *Feminism and theology*, edited by Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 314.

10 Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 142.

11 Michael Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 81–82, 191–199, 189. Gorman engages with Okure, especially on page 84. See also 8 fn. 20, 34, 38, 41, 65 fn. 145, 68 fn. 154, 78, 83, 144 fn. 34, 147, 186.

12 Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 83.

role of local communities in the integrating of faith beyond Sunday, attentive to practices that listen and discern the activity of God.

While *missio Dei* has found “widespread acceptance in East and West among most churches and international networks,”<sup>13</sup> it has undergone critique. Indigenous scholar Carmen Rae Lansdowne laments the capture of *missio Dei* by American and European theologians. However, rather than dismiss *missio Dei*, she argues from an indigenous perspective that *missio Dei* needs to be understood as “grounded in right action—towards the earth, towards each other, towards our histories, stories, cultures and values.”<sup>14</sup> This pushes us to consider not only right-thinking but also right-acting through ecclesial practices. Through the intentional cultivation of ecclesial practices, a community of people is called forth to participate in the new creation.<sup>15</sup> These practices are listed as baptism, breaking bread, reconciliation, discernment, and hospitality. The result is not “one mission theology, but many, with all these theologies serving to equip the saints in all their cultural settings for the common missionary vocation.”<sup>16</sup> Again, we see the necessity of researching the local community, attentive to practices that are missional as they are formational.

Hence the witness of the whole people of God beyond Sunday requires an understanding of being *ecclesia discens*, a listening community. It is intriguing that as David Bosch outlines how Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God can be a contemporary paradigm of mission, he turns to teaching and learning. For Bosch, missiology is rooted in *missio Dei*, the community is the bearer of mission and ministry by the whole people of God becomes “one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today.”<sup>17</sup> This requires rethinking the categories of *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church) and *ecclesia discens* (the learning church). Laypersons are no longer just the scouts who, returning from the ‘outside world’ ... report to the ‘operational basis’; they *are* the operational basis from which *missio Dei* proceeds.<sup>18</sup> Hence ordination must result in a “priesthood of the whole church.”<sup>19</sup> It is challenging to place Bosch’s

13 Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World. A Global Conversation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007), 52.

14 Carmen Lansdowne, “Bearing Witness: Wearing a broken indigene heart on the sleeve of the *missio Dei*” (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2016), 220.

15 Guder, *The Missional Church*, 152–3.

16 Darrell Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 43.

17 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 467.

18 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 472.

19 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 474.

vision alongside the snippet of conversation with which I began. How can a theological vision of ministry for the whole people of God be enacted if the preacher is considered not one of us? How might the practices of worship and preaching overcome perceptions of being detached from everyday life? How can the gathering life of Sunday shape and influence 'a life beyond Sunday'? Can *missio Dei* reshape the trajectories of churches concerning faith and work?

These are pedagogical questions that require reflection on how to rightly understand laity, ordination and how people mature and change. The Great Commission offers a missiology in which disciple-making is interwoven with teaching and sacramental actions. The focus is on the transmission of faith, evident in the command to teach and to make disciples. How to rightly understand the interplay between the injunctions to go, to make and to teach? Can going be reconceived in ways other than Okure's critique of mission as focused on commission "over there," which results in "complacency on the part of first-world Christians"?<sup>20</sup> Teaching ministries are often conceived as located in the pulpit and sacramental actions defined by sacred buildings on of Sunday. The notion of 'Sunday' best can diminish the vitality of witness beyond Sunday. Hence faith and work present particular challenges for mission thinking. How might ministries of Word and sacrament, often perceived as ecclesially bound, share in weekday life? How to rightly understand *teaching*, as not "for them" but as *listening* and *discerning* in ways congruent with the *missio Dei*? Newbigin upheld the place of a local community of believers to demonstrate the potency of the gospel: "the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it".<sup>21</sup> How to understand the interplay between gathered and scattered, the power of being together light on a hill and an individual grain of salt?<sup>22</sup>

Biblically, David Bosch argued that the Great Commission must be read against the background of Matthew's Gospel as a whole. In the Gospel of Matthew, there is a distinction between proclaiming (*kerysso*) and teaching (*didasko*). Proclaiming (*kerysso*) is always addressed to outsiders, teaching (*didasko*) to the disciples. Why then does Jesus 'teach' in the Great Commission, in a text commissioning universal outreach?<sup>23</sup> The answer lies in how Matthew understands teaching as an appeal to the will, not the intellect. "The context of this is not the classroom, nor even the church, but the world."<sup>24</sup>

20 Okure, "Jesus and Mary Magdalene," 314.

21 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 227.

22 I am working with the images of salt and light used by Jesus to describe the disciples in Matthew 5.13–16.

23 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 66.

24 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 67.

Joining in with what God is doing is a teaching that occurs in the contexts of domestic mission like office and kitchen. However, Bosch also argues that these Great Commission activities are a work of the entire community. "For Matthew, the expression 'disciples' does not refer to the Twelve only ... The term thus expands to include the 'disciples' of Matthew's own time."<sup>25</sup> Hence the congregation is indeed, to draw on Newbigin, the hermeneutic of the gospel.<sup>26</sup> From life beyond Sunday, we learn together. In the words of Miroslav Volf, "the working life of Christians [is] a particular case of life in the Spirit in general."<sup>27</sup> A reading of the Great Commission in the context of the entire Gospel of Matthew provides ways to make sense of Gorman's argument that discipleship and witness are two different ways of understanding one reality.<sup>28</sup>

How might these affirmations work in practice? How might *Missio Dei* be formational and missionary? This chapter explores how a local church might participate in God's ordering of *missio Dei* beyond Sunday. It examines how an ordained minister might encourage 'life beyond Sunday,' the church as *ecclesia discens* in which every person is offered ways to be salt, light and yeast with particular insights.<sup>29</sup>

### 3 Methodology

John Reader argues for two different approaches to theology.<sup>30</sup> One approach is to head for the mountains to seek a long view. Another approach is to head for the cities in search of people in specific local contexts. Both are valid, yet have different starting points. This project begins in the specifics of the local.

This chapter provides a case study of one church, Opawa Baptist. Between 2004 and 2009, I provided ministry as Senior Pastor at Opawa Baptist Church, a 96-year old church in a working-class area of Christchurch, New Zealand. Throughout this time, I sought to outwork a missiology of faith and work. This paper undertakes a documentary analysis of that period, clarifying the missiological influences, describing the actions and reflecting the learnings.

In this research, I am both subject and object, activist and reflector. This complexity is an outworking of action research, a form of praxis in which "informed, committed action ... gives rise to knowledge as well as successful

25 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 74.

26 Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 227.

27 Miroslav Volf, "Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation: Toward a pneumatological understanding of work," *Pneuma* (1987): 185.

28 Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 81–82.

29 I am working with the granular particularity implied by Matthew 5.13–16; 13.22.

30 John Reader, *Local Theology: Church and Community in Dialogue* (London: SPCK, 1994).

action.”<sup>31</sup> Two words provide meaning. Action is what is done, while research is what is learnt and the explanations that result. It is an internationally recognized approach that improves practice and creates knowledge. Importantly, it allows insiders, those with existing commitments and knowledge, to participate both in change and knowledge creation. It is coherent with Christian doctrines of creation, incarnation and trinity, in which God is participating in and attending to, the life of the world.<sup>32</sup>

Because action research is embedded in context, it works with knowledge as co-created. The social location of the researcher shapes all research. Being a minister ensured action research that was approved by church leadership and discerned in co-created partnerships through participation in the liturgy, discussion groups and congregations. These ensured ideas were embedded in grounded actions. Actions were guided by ethical commitments laid out in Code of Ethics for Ministry in the Baptist Churches of New Zealand. In order to enhance visibility, triangulation occurred through blogging. I reflected on the actions and communal engagement online at [www.emergentkiwi.org.nz](http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz). Participants and critical friends read these reflections. These provided accountability in the research and a groundedness as I subjected my “provisional claim to knowledge to the critical scrutiny of others and invite their feedback.”<sup>33</sup> This chapter takes the blogged reflections, as ‘triangulated data’ to theorize what was helping “people to grow in ways that are right for them.”<sup>34</sup> The living theory of faith and work I offer argues for the crucial role of *ecclesia discens* (the learning church) growing in faith-full witness in life beyond Sunday.

Three areas of the praxis of faith and work will be interrogated; liturgical praxis around monthly workplace pastoral prayers, ‘spirituality to go,’ small group practices of discernment and action-reflection. The categories of *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church) and *ecclesia discens* (the learning church) are used to examine *missio Dei* as faith and work are integrated into a local church.

#### 4 Beginning Conversations through Gathered Sunday Prayer

How might the local church in worship and witness participate in these dimensions of *missio Dei*? This section considers the prayers for the world as a key site

31 Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research Project*, 3rd edn. (London, UK: Routledge Falmer, 2010), 20.

32 Paul Fiddes, “Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, edited by Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 26–27.

33 McNiff and Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research Project*, 174.

34 McNiff and Whitehead, *You and Your Action Research Project*, 253.



in the gathered life of a worshipping church. It examines actions that encourage conversation about individual (scattered) work and witness. *Missio Dei* is tested as follows: If God is ahead of us in our workplaces, then what might it mean to join that work through pastoral prayer?

Actions were taken to incorporate individual life beyond Sunday work into cycles of pastoral prayer in gathered worship. A first step was to compile a database of occupations of church members. Occupations were grouped, and on a semi-regular basis, one of these groupings was phoned by the pastoral team.<sup>35</sup> An introduction noted that the prayers for the world in gathered worship was to include a focus on a specific occupation. In order to listen, four questions were asked: What do you like best about what you do? What are the frustrations and challenges? What would you like included in public prayer for you and others who do this work? What symbols would you choose to represent your work? The phone call concluded with a request to bring a symbol of their work to the church service.

A second step involved collating the information and crafting prayers for the world. How might a church, after listening to specific joys, frustrations and challenges, participate in prayer? What biblical images might inform the specific occupation? Reviewing the archived resources in relation to these services of gathered worship, prayers were prayed for the weekday vocations that included creative people, entrepreneurs, food workers, health workers, office workers, students and retirees. This is a reformationist approach, believing that in all occupations, God's vision for a world more just is possible.

In developing the prayers, the commitment was to enact *ecclesia discens*, to be a learning church. This required a commitment to write unique prayers for unique individuals in unique situations. External resources exist, and it was tempting to download prayers from such sources.<sup>36</sup> However, *ecclesia discens* is embodied as those who pray, listen to those who work. The church as local is joining in what the Spirit is doing, sharing joy with individual members along with petition for matters that challenge and frustrate. *Missio Dei* is particularized, not in general categories but the specific and particular.

What wisdom might office workers find in the life of Joseph in Genesis narrative? As governor, he kept records of grain, measured, bought and sold (Genesis 41.47–49). The vocation of health workers was brought into dialogue with the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (John 12.1–8), and the words of Jesus that

35 See Steve Taylor, "Worship, work and witness: action research in a local church." <http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz/archive/worship-work-and-witness-action-research-in-a-local-church/>. Accessed 13 July 2022.

36 These include websites like London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC), Oikonomia Network and Theology of Work.

what is done for the least, is done for God (Matthew 25.45). Retirement was named as a way of enacting of Genesis account of God resting on the sabbath, walking in the garden in the cool of the evening (Genesis 2.2, 3.8). The activity of entrepreneurs was aligned with the parable of the talents, naming the blessing of being gifted, the value of taking risks with gifts (Matthew 25.14–30). These prayers began with listening. This was a posture in line with *ecclesia discens* (the learning church). From this listening, prayer was created. This is *ecclesia discens*; the church engaged in action-reflection, in which lived experience is brought into conversation with Scripture and theology.

This work of gathered prayer included the invitation to individuals to bring visual symbols of life beyond Sunday into gathered worship. The impact of cell phones, stethoscopes and laboratory coats at the front of the church focused the worship into the particular and the everyday. It also engendered conversations, as individual members became more aware of the materiality of each other's occupations. Life beyond Sunday shaped the conversations of gathered worship, not only in prayers for others but in conversations that followed gathered worship.

The result of this action—of incorporating individual life beyond Sunday work into cycles of pastoral prayer in gathered worship - was multiple meaningful conversations between the gathered life of a local church and individual occupations. The church was learning by listening to the hopes and challenges of individuals in their life beyond Sunday. Signs of this learning were evident in the pro-active phone calls, the use of questions to ensure listening, the theological reflection occurring within the local community and the conversations that resulted from the visibility of life beyond Sunday engendered in the invitation to display visual symbols. The church was joining where God was already at work. Occupations were a participation in God's work in the world, and the church was joining those, by phoning, listening, reflecting and gathering in prayer around these occupations. The work of prayer was beginning with learning through listening, an expression of *ecclesial discens*.

As a final step, the prayer was printed and sent to each person who had been phoned.<sup>37</sup> This emerged in recognition that not every person being prayed for attended gathered worship weekly. In turn, this posed a further challenge for the worship, work and witness of this local church. The incorporating of individual life beyond Sunday work into cycles of pastoral prayer was an embrace of *ecclesial discens*. However, the work of discernment was an activity

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37 For example: The vision explained, "Our vision ... is to encourage people to walk and grow with Jesus. One way we can do that is to pray for people in their work situations." (20/4/2007). See Steve Taylor, "Worship, work and witness."

expressed in particular times and places, as part of a particular church service. What action might encourage prayer at any time and place? Could such actions continue to express the church as gathered joining in prayer with what God was doing in life beyond Sunday?

## 5 Relocating Conversations through Scattered Weekday Prayer Resources

This section introduces scattered weekday prayer resources as an action that was both connected to the gathered life of a worshipping church, yet encouraged conversation about individual (scattered) work and witness. *Missio Dei* is tested as follows: If God is ahead of us in all of life, then what might it mean to join that work through scattered weekday prayer resources?

As a minister, I was invited into conversation about life beyond Sunday. I heard joyful stories of young people passing a driving test and painful stories of other young people losing their license due to traffic offences. I heard joyful stories of the finding of better housing and painful stories of forced relocations due to tenancy changes. Some events were too personal to mention publicly. Nevertheless, how might the church acting in prayer connect with these transitions in all of life beyond Sunday?

The work of Olive Fleming Drane invited specific application. She notes broader cultural shifts, including the increasing role of spirituality in everyday life in western societies, along with the changing nature of work. She argues that an essential part of integrating faith and life, including in work, involves rituals for everyday life, what she calls 'spirituality to go.' This integrating of faith in all of life is an expression of *missio Dei*, creating spaces to encounter the divine Spirit, who is easy to miss in the secularized rush of life.<sup>38</sup> This provides a missiological frame. If God was active in all of life, then how could we encourage prayerful attention as a 24/7 spirituality.

We used transitions as a lens and began to brainstorm.<sup>39</sup> When church members dropped by the church, we paused as a staff team and invited them to morning tea. During the conversation, we would ask each other: What are the life transitions people go through? Could everyday objects symbolize these transitions? These conversations located our discernment with the wider church and focused us beyond worship at particular times and places.

38 Fleming Drane, *Spirituality to Go*, 14.

39 See Steve Taylor, "transition packs." <http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz/archive/transition-packs/>. Accessed 13 July 2022.

The concept became known as ‘**transition packs**’. We identified transitions like moving house, migration, first job, gaining a qualification, surgery, boyfriend and girlfriend breakups. Spiritual practices could include planting new seeds in hope, lighting a candle in gratitude, journaling in discerning, treating oneself to a ‘walk in the park’ or a ‘good cry.’

Sometimes this was public. A child going to school was given a pencil in front of the community. Other times this was private. A person facing temporary suspension of a driving license was given cycling gloves. In each case, the intention was first to connect the church with these everyday events. The pencil to write, the seeds germinating, each was a reminder of the prayers of the church.

This was providing rituals for everyday life, inviting participants to encounter the divine Spirit. Prayer as an activity was located not in the ‘all-heads-bowed’ quiet of a gathered service but in the life beyond Sunday rush of life. The ‘transition packs’ were a way of joining God, who was affirmed as active in our week places. Further, it re-oriented vision, particularly for the church staff team, to life beyond the gathering. This was learning, cultivating ministerial attentiveness around how to encourage prayer in all of life. Finally, it began new conversations. Church members could, in the weeks following, ask the child given the pencil how school was going. The focus on transitions enabled conversations beyond paid employment as a central source of identity.

Transition packs were a way to embody *missio Dei*. Weekday prayer resources were a joining with God who was ahead of us in all of life. These resources were generated in conversations among the gathered community, yet encouraged the more scattered nature of life beyond Sunday. This made visible a weekday church, seeking to enact *missio Dei*, by making spaces in all of life for tangible encounters with the divine Spirit.

For some, this seeing of God in all of life beyond Sunday sparked exciting conversations. As a further action, small groups formed in order to deepen the conversations.

## 6      **Work and Witness: Conversational Formation in God@work Discernment Groups**

This section examines groups and practices that encourage discernment of God in all of life. *Missio Dei* is tested as: How might God’s people join with God ahead of us in our vocations? How can a local church embody the assertion by Alan Roxburgh that the “contextualizing congregation must learn to ‘listen’ and ‘see’”? More importantly, how does a church embody this in postures of

learning, as “a dynamic *interaction* in which both sides are changed through dialogue.”<sup>40</sup> Dwelling in the Word is a practice advocated by Roxburgh as a way to discern the agency of God in the world.<sup>41</sup>

The practice allows God to speak both individually and corporately, through listening deeply to God and one another. Might an adapting of these practices provide a way to embody *ecclesia discens* (the learning church)?

The God@work discernment group began with an introductory series of evening studies. Nigel Wright, an Anglican ordinand, with a keen interest in workplace spirituality, asked to do a ‘workplace’ internship with us at Opawa Baptist.<sup>42</sup> The internship included offered a three-week course on “Where is God on Monday?”<sup>43</sup>

At the end, participants expressed a desire to continue. The request provided an opportunity to further explore *ecclesia discens* (the learning church), with the group structuring their life around learning from their workplace experiences. Instead of focusing on information as a manifestation of *ecclesia docens* (the teaching church), Dwelling in the Word was modified. In the first cycle, evening by evening, participants would take a turn to describe a workplace experience. Questions (what strikes us? what questions do we have?) enabled a ‘dwelling’ in the shared experience. In the second cycle of Dwelling, a Bible passage considered relevant to the work area was read, followed again by questions seeking surprise (what strikes us?) and connection (between experience and biblical text). A third cycle involved sharing a particular spiritual practice, as a concrete way of living as disciples beyond Monday. “At the end of the day the group is about resources, whether it be in problem-solving particular issues or providing resources to share with the wider church community ... The key being to get the group doing the work, from research, to materials produced, bringing guests in from specific issue/work type.”<sup>44</sup> This modification of Dwelling in the Word was *ecclesia discens*. God could speak both individually and corporately, not only through Scripture but also through workplace participation. The group meet monthly for all the time I was in

40 Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 69.

41 Alan Roxburgh, *Missional. Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Ada, MI: Baker, 2011), 68–9. I participated with Alan Roxburgh in several conferences during 2006. I sought to implement the Dwelling in the Word practice I observed at Opawa Baptist Church.

42 Nigel Wright is a contributor in this book, writing “Setting God’s People Free: The Apostolate of the Laity,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

43 See Taylor, “Worship, work and witness.”

44 Nigel Wright, Email message to author, 2006.

ministry at Opawa Baptist, finding nourishment in their desire to embody a faith-full work witness.

Another expression of *ecclesia discens* was introduced to one of the congregations at Opawa Baptist Church. Espresso was a Tuesday evening gathering that used shared practices of conversation to deepen faith. Every fourth gathering of the month, as part of their mission, Espresso listened as a congregational participant shared an occupation. First, a participant took about fifteen minutes to describe their occupation, how they got there, what the occupation required. Next, those gathered reflected theologically on what they had heard. A trinitarian framework was suggested, in which discernment of God as active in the world practised through using a set of questions shaped around God as creator, redeemer and sustainer.<sup>45</sup> The use of the language of God as creator, redeemer and sustainer was deployed in order to pay attention to revelation, to God's work and activity, to "the actuality of the Word of God" as distinguished from "the doctrine of the Trinity" considered as a 'dogma,' 'doctrine,' 'basic view.'<sup>46</sup> Using this framework had risks, including diminishing the relationality inherent in the historical formulations of God as Father, Son and Spirit. However, we sensed the language would enhance integrating worship, work and witness. Importantly, it ensured an engagement with the reality of God as revealed.

Aware of the risks, encouraging by the possibilities we provided the following:

- *Creator*—What in this work blesses creation? What in this work takes responsibility for creation?
- *Redeemer*—What in this work enhances life? What in this work offers some redeeming of life and people?

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45 The discussion regarding God as related to the world in act and being are complex. Barth notes "that God in his relation to the human being is Creator, Mediator and Redeemer." This suggests that God is active, and hence discernable, in the work of *missio Dei* in the world, visibly in modes of creator, redeemer and sustainer. However, for Barth, God "cannot be dissolved into his work and activity." (1, 2, pp. 878–879, citing George Hunsinger, "Election and the Trinity: Twenty-five theses on the Theology of Karl Barth," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 2 (April 2008), 189. Hunsinger describes the discussions regarding God in act and being as "some of the most fundamental questions in contemporary theology." Hunsinger, "Election and the Trinity," 179. However, such questions, while important, were beyond the scope of this group as it committed to integrating worship, work and witness in the context of life beyond Sunday.

46 Steve Perisho, "Liber locorum communium: Barth on (let's say) the simple substitution of Creator-Redeemer-Sustainer." <http://liberlocorumcommunium.blogspot.com/2010/06/barth-on-substitution-of-creator.html>. Accessed 13 July 2022.

– *Sustainer*—What in this work breathes God's peace and forgiveness? What in this work sustains God's dreams of living and loving?

Invariably, through listening deeply to God and one another, new insight emerged. This was *ecclesia discens*, the church learning together about how vocation might be an embodiment of God as creator, redeemer and sustainer. Sometimes this affirmed an individual's sense of vocation. Other times, the sense of vocation was challenged. After one gathering, the person sharing resigned their work, in order to express more clearly the vocation they had realized was their true calling.

God as sustainer was an empowering theme, helping particular vocations, including laboratory technicians and veterinary workers, see their vocation as a participation in *missio Dei*. The focus on God as sustainer is interesting, given the work of theologian Miroslav Volf, who argues that theologies of work need to draw on Pauline understanding of charisms.<sup>47</sup> For Volf, industrial societies operate with a limited definition of work focused on formal activity or monetary gain. However, a pneumatological understanding of work opens up the whole spectrum of human activities, offering dynamic understanding consistent with the increased plurality of timestyles required in contemporary industrial and information societies.<sup>48</sup> The result is theological resources that not only “ennoble dehumanizing work” but also provide resources to foster structural or other kinds of change.<sup>49</sup> The Trinity was no longer an abstract doctrine but was grounded in faith-full work witness and revealed in conversational discernment, which both ennoble the work of the laboratory technician, but in the agency of the Spirit, invites transformation. The practices of Dwelling and the discernment questions were an embrace of *ecclesial discens*. The church was learning in a fluid interplay between individual lives and communal gathered, scattered vocations and gathered discernment. This was liturgy as the work of the people, attentive to how might God's people join with God ahead of us in our vocations.

## 7 Action Discerned

Bosch argued that ministry by the whole people of God is “one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today.”<sup>50</sup> This chapter has explored

47 Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation,” 185.

48 Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation,” 174, 188.

49 Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation,” 174, 181.

50 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 467.



shifts in worship, work and witness in which a local church adopted a learning posture of *ecclesia discens* rather than a teaching posture of *ecclesia docens*. A starting point was liturgical praxis, acting in gathered Sunday worship through monthly workplace pastoral prayers that enabled the church as gathered to listen to the joys and challenges of life beyond Sunday for individuals in this particular faith community. However, this action, while an important step in listening, was limited to Sunday gatherings. Hence, scattered weekday prayer resources in the form of transition packs were initiated as a second set of actions. These resources invited prayer in all of life, deepening the listening to life beyond Sunday, an embodiment of *missio Dei* as the work of God in the world beyond Sunday is discerned.<sup>51</sup> In the third set of actions, practices of Dwelling in work, an adaptation of Dwelling in the Word, were used to attend to experience and vocation. The result was *ecclesia discens*, evident in the life of a God@work group, along with a monthly congregational consideration of vocation as an embodiment of God as creator, redeemer and sustainer. In each of these actions were embodied ways to integrate worship, work and witness and in ways that embodied *ecclesia discens*.

It is instructive to bring these actions of a local church community into dialogue with the intellectual work of David Miller. For Miller, the faith and work movement has involved three waves. A first wave, between 1890–1945, was stimulated by the social gospel era. A second wave, between 1945–1980, accentuated the ministry of the laity. Indeed, much of the literature on which Bosch draws, as summarized by Norman Thomas, is drawn from this second wave.<sup>52</sup> Miller argues for a third wave, which involves actions concerning the societal changes of our current globalized, neo-liberal, technologized society. In this third wave, Miller offers a typology for local faith and work actions by the people of God beyond Sunday. Ethics focuses on how to live Christianly beyond Sunday. Experience prioritizes the value of everyday life. Enrichment offers practices to encourage faith formation in the context of faith and work are integrated into a local church. Evangelisation values the workplace as an avenue for witness. The actions of Opawa focused primarily on experience, in the gathered Sunday prayer and the God@work group, along with enrichment, through the scattered weekday prayer resources and the trinitarian framework in which God is creator, redeemer and sustainer. However, ethics were valued in the gathered Sunday prayer, while witness was supported through the God@work group. Hence the actions at Opawa fit with what Miller affirms as

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51 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.

52 Norman Thomas, ed., *Readings in World Mission* (London: SPCK, 1995).



an integration grid, a hybrid of all four, which enables “a heightened level of maturity, respect, and appreciation for multiple ways of integrating faith and work.”<sup>53</sup>

The actions of faith and work undertaken by the people of God beyond Sunday at Opawa Baptist Church had a number of distinct features. First, while Miller argues that much of gathered church life, including sermon topics, illustrations, prayers, pastoral care bear little relevance of life beyond Sunday, at Opawa it was the gathered prayers that began the journey of integrating faith and work with the ministry of the whole people of God.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, much of this ‘life beyond Sunday’ as *ecclesia discens* was communal. It required the sharing of joys and challenges in prayer and diverse, unique experiences in the God@work group. It drew on the feedback from those present in the God@work group and the monthly congregation discernment.

Second, this ‘life beyond Sunday’ as *ecclesia discens* focuses on particularity rather than locality. In contrast to Roxburgh, this shifted the locus of contextualization. *Missio Dei* was outworked in “the particularity of specific contexts” focused on vocations, rather than local neighbourhoods.<sup>55</sup> Opawa Baptist drew people from across the city. Hence to affirm the local involved valuing the particularity of vocations, in gathered prayer, through scattered prayer resources for specific transitions and conversational discernment through the God@work group and monthly Espresso gatherings.

Third, this ‘life beyond Sunday’ as *ecclesia discens* was both affirming and critiquing, including through the actions of God at work as creator, redeemer and sustainer. As *missio Dei* was framed with a trinitarian shape, affirmation and critique of “beyond Sunday” life occurred. The result was *ecclesia discens by the community*.

Fourth, we must reconsider the Great Commission in Matthew 28.19–20. In particular, what if the teaching church (*ecclesia docens*) is, in the context of mission, better understood as the learning church (*ecclesia discens*)? Bosch translates Gerhard Friedrich’s as follows: “The sequel ‘baptising’ and ‘teaching’ is not a doctrinal oversight but consciously chosen by Matthew ... Through baptism the one is baptized is made to partake of the entire fullness of the divine promise.”<sup>56</sup>

Matthew 28.19–20 read in light of the entire Gospel of Matthew could be understood as: Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and learning to obey everything that I have commanded you. In this

53 David Miller, “The Faith at work movement,” *Theology Today* 60 (2003): 307.

54 Miller, “The Faith at work movement,” 301–2.

55 Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 68.

56 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 79.

understanding, baptism is learning—specifically a becoming into fullness. This reading makes sense of the learning actions at Opawa, the listening through gathered prayer and life transitions and the practices of conversational discernment. This reading of Matthew 28.19–20 is consistent with Bosch's understanding of the Great Commission. This returns us to *missio Dei*. We 'Go' to 'life beyond Sunday,' where God is already active. We re-faith through vocations, that while particular, are never individual.

This attends to *missio Dei*, allowing an understanding of disciple-making and mission as teaching by learning. Through *ecclesia discens*—questions seeking surprise (what strikes us?) and connection (between experience and biblical text); discussion of God as creator, redeemer and sustainer—we learn to live in fullness our baptism in the name of God as creator, redeemer and sustainer. The Spirit is in the world, including the office and kitchen, retirement home and university classroom. The gathered church re-faiths work as it inhabits intentional conversations. Ecclesial activities of prayer, pastoral care and Christian education are conversations attentive to the divine work in the world. Mission is no longer for the select few in darkest Africa, but shared discernment of God's activity in all of life. Faith and work outworked as learning conversations order the church in discipling, Word and sacrament around a domestic mission.

Further research is required. Practically, could the resources outlined in the case study invigorate other local communities of faith? Further action research by other missiologically formed church ministers would test the value gathered prayer, scattered prayer resources and practices of discernment in action-reflection. Theoretically, the framing of local as particular and vocational, rather than local and neighbourly, requires further research. Is this a missiology for a networked world? Alternatively, is it a capitulation to an algorithmic culture of shared interests?<sup>57</sup> Such questions, both practical and theoretical, are the essence of action research, as the local church seeks to embody a hermeneutic by which *missio Dei* is discerned as faith-full witness to life beyond Sunday.

## 8 Conclusion

This local action research case study has examined how to respond missiologically in contexts where work is considered a domain that is separate,

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57 Ted Striphas, "Algorithmic culture. Culture now has two audiences: people and machines." <https://medium.com/futurists-views/algorithmic-culture-culture-now-has-two-audiences-people-and-machines-2bdaa404f643>. Accessed 13 July 2022.

distinct and removed from the Christian faith proclaimed on Sunday. Three sets of spiritual practices were implemented: public prayer, scattered prayer and practices of discernment in action-reflection. These actions invited the whole people of God into the *missio dei* and challenged the dualisms between worship, work and witness. This case study provides hope as it describes the journey of change and maturation of the workplace witness of members of a local church. The life beyond Sunday that resulted was communal, particular and trinitarian in shape. This is consistent with an interpretation of the Great Commission as baptizing into the fullness of vocational life, learning together (*ecclesia discens*) to obey everything that God as creator, redeemer, sustainer commands in *missio Dei*. In the outworking of the Great Commission, attention to the learning practices, particularly listening and discerning, among whole people of God are essential.

God's love for the world births, transforms and structures the mission of the whole people of God. The church is a servant of God's missionary venture, the pilgrim people of God structured to follow God's work in the world. Hence life beyond Sunday becomes an essential organizing principle. The specific practices described in this chapter, including Sunday work prayers, weekday prayer resources and conversational formation around God's work in the world, provided ways to participate in God's mission in places of work, leisure and life beyond Sunday. These practices illuminate how the nature of the church, as *ecclesia discens*, not *ecclesia docens*, can shape the understanding of the people of God as reflectors of Christ the light who has come into the world.

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# Setting God's People Free: the Apostolate of the Laity

*Nigel Wright*

## Abstract

The Church of England is investing millions of pounds into its Renewal and Reform Program. The institution is determined to “empower, liberate and disciple the 98% of the Church of England who are not ordained and therefore set them free for fruitful, faithful mission and ministry, influence, leadership and, most importantly, vibrant relationship with Jesus in all of life.” Using Bosch's premise of the missiology task being to critically accompany the missionary enterprise, the author will utilize a hermeneutic phenomenology of his own setting as a leader in a local church and a task group member of a national learning community seeking to implement the recommendations of the program. A major focus of the program is an initiative called “Setting God's People free,” which seeks to equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life, through a variety of initiatives and programs. Initial challenges include disseminating this program, a national initiative, at diocesan and parish levels. In addition, addressing the multiple generations of people with little or no language of faith and biblical and theological literacy severely challenged at a local level, is a significant challenge; as is church members who have little engagement with the Bible, worship, or prayer in their everyday lives, and who feel ill equipped to live out their faith in their daily lives. This chapter explores, by drawing on lived experience, the work being undertaken at a local level through a national initiative, and seeks to answer the question whether an inherited institution can respond to the call to rediscover the apostolate of the laity.

## Keywords

Faith and work – Missiology – primary theology – apostolate of the laity – transforming mission – Service (*Diakonia*) & Witness (Evangelism) – Setting God's People Free – adoration and action

## 1 Missiological Exploration

In February 2017, the Archbishop's council released the report "Setting God's People Free" (SGPF) to the General Synod of the Church of England (C of E).<sup>1</sup> The introduction to the paper sets out the questions that drove the research for the whole report: "Will we determine to empower, liberate and disciple the 98 % of the Church of England who are not ordained and therefore set them free for fruitful, faithful mission and ministry, influence, leadership and, most importantly, vibrant relationship with Jesus in all of life?"<sup>2</sup> Vatican II defined the apostolate of the laity as "sharing in the salvific mission of the church" with a "special vocation: to make the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth."<sup>3</sup> The SGPF report expresses the critical need to ensure the laity "engage in fruitful, faithful mission and ministry" as a "great opportunity that has arguably not been fully grasped since the days of Wesley."<sup>4</sup>

The aim in this chapter is to critically accompany the SGPF project looking for signs and phenomena that will lead to a rediscovery of the apostolate of the laity, to such a degree that "transformation of profound proportions will manifest itself in church and society."<sup>5</sup> To do this I utilized a hermeneutic phenomenology of my own setting. Following Lavery, I was "concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived. The focus is toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding."<sup>6</sup>

1 The National Assembly of the Church of England. More information can be found at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/about-general-synod>.

2 Archbishops' Council. "'Setting God's People Free,' A report from the Archbishops' Council GS2056," 1. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/gs-2056-setting-gods-people-free.pdf>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

3 "Lumen Gentium" (1964), Art. 12, 33 in VC2, 363, 390–91; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 250.

4 Archbishops' Council, *Setting God's People Free*, 14.

5 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 481.

6 Susanna M. Lavery, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (2003), 24. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940690300200303>. Accessed 9 December 2022; drawing on Holly Skodol Wilson and Sally A. Hutchinson. "Triangulation of

As an ordained minister in the workplace for many years I had a mixed portfolio of corporate business leader and local church leader which stressed and highlighted the challenges and disparities between two vastly different contexts. A desire to utilize that experience in a missionary perspective and help others with similar struggles and challenges led to this post as an incumbent (lead minister) of St Edmund's, one of only 108 C of E churches in the UK chosen to be a pilot church as part of the renewal and reform program.<sup>7</sup>

St Edmund's is situated in a relatively wealthy suburb of North Leeds in the United Kingdom, in the Diocese (area) of Leeds. The demographic of the area is such that a high proportion of the congregation (church) members are professionals in the affluent city of Leeds, in financial and corporate services, the city's teaching hospitals, and universities. St Edmund's works to ensure its ecclesiastical setting and mission is understood in a broad-church perspective trying to resist being placed on an "ideological spectrum from liberal/left wing to conservative/right wing."<sup>8</sup>

David Bosch's framework of missiology offered me a helpful framework to critically accompany the SGPF project. He saw the task of missiology to scrutinize "not from the safe distance of an onlooker, but in a spirit of co-responsibility and of service to the Church of Christ."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Bosch was interested in both theology and missionary praxis.<sup>10</sup> Missiology for Bosch helped sharpen the theological aspect:

Missiology acts as a gadfly in the house of theology, creating unrest and resisting complacency, opposing every ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation, every desire to stay what we are, every inclination to provincialism and parochialism, every fragmentation of humanity into regional or ideological blocs, every exploitation of some sectors of humanity by the powerful, every religious, ideological, or cultural imperialism, and every exultation of the self-sufficiency of the individual over other people or over other parts of creation.<sup>11</sup>

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qualitative methods: Heideggerian hermeneutics and grounded theory." *Qualitative Health Research*, 1 (1991), 263–276.

7 Correct as of July 2020.

8 Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-centered Ministry in your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 292.

9 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 508.

10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 508.

11 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 508.



Yet Bosch was also interested in a second task: to critically accompany the missionary praxis which “stands in creative tension with mission’s origins, with the biblical text and the history of the church’s missionary involvement” and “present-day missiology’s concern is a contextual elucidation of the relationship between God, God’s world, and God’s church.”<sup>12</sup> This presents new challenges when trying to address language and context. By way of example, there are those at St Edmund’s (and in every church I have been part of across the last thirty years) who when they hear the word mission will immediately think of a person sent overseas to convert those without knowledge of Christianity or a church mission week involving often painful and embarrassing memories of going into the local community to “convert” people.

We need context and a language that educates and allows the praxis to be scrutinized. This scrutiny comes through exploration, always aware that this is *missio Dei*, God’s mission that the whole people of God are to be part of. This chapter is an exercise in scrutiny and exploration of SGPF.

## 2 Disseminating the Program

Disseminating the SGPF program from a national initiative to practical action at a parish level required the negotiation of complex hierarchical structures in an organization that has “become tribal and divided.”<sup>13</sup> Before the report was even presented to the Synod meeting, viewpoints were being expressed such as those by Andrew Symes of “Anglican Mainstream” who stated that “as with all these schemes, a question has to be asked about whether writing well-researched reports and rolling out centralised programs is the best way to promote healthy churches.”<sup>14</sup>

The annex to the SGPF report contains a high-level implementation strategy that includes within that strategy inter-diocesan learning communities.<sup>15</sup> These communities were to be part of the strategy of negotiating hierarchical

12 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 509.

13 Cottrell, *Presidential Address*, last paragraph. Madeleine Davies, Adam Becket, and Tim Wyatt report from General Synod in York, “General Synod: Culture Shift has started but will take time,” *Church Times* (12 July 2019), <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/12-july/news/uk/general-synod-culture-shift-on-laity-has-started-but-will-take-time>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

14 Symes. *General Synod presented with vision for “Setting God’s People Free, Anglican Mainstream* (24 January 2017), <https://anglicanmainstream.org/general-synod-presented-with-vision-for-setting-gods-people-free>.

15 Archbishops’ Council, *Setting God’s People Free*, Annex 1, 1–4.

structures and divisions in the C of E. It was initially hoped that representatives from nine Dioceses would take part in these learning communities but by the time of the July 2019 Synod, 24 of the 42 had taken part. This was a good indicator of the desire and recognition of the need for the program.

Meeting for 48 hours every 6 months the learning communities were made up of a team from each Diocese. Clergy and laity were represented in each team together with senior bishop's staff and parish practitioners. The learning communities were creatively steered to ensure lived experience, practical theology, and lay discipleship were all engaged with. The focus on faith in the workplace and everyday faith was excellent and of a depth that I had never experienced in a C of E learning setting. To be able to gather with colleagues from across the country and learn from each other's practices and experiences was both inspiring and educational. For each six-month period, each diocese took from the learning community various learnings to reflect upon and various objectives to prepare the Diocese for the introduction of the SGPF project. There were strong signs that if the explorations and learnings could be disseminated, down to a parish level and the laity in particular, transformation would be a very real possibility. There were good indicators that complacency would not be allowed to prevail.

Additional challenges were quickly highlighted, as one bishop quoted in a subsequent interview with the program director "they hadn't realized how far back they were (*the bishop's Diocese*)" in terms of "discipleship making," particularly for equipping in the workplace. Nick Shepherd, the program director confirmed to me what I have also experienced in the C of E, that "we might assume that readers, clergy and other ministers are able to equip and support the people of God for works of service, I may be puzzled about why it does not happen, but you uncover the assumptions and you realize that actually we haven't selected people on that basis, we haven't trained them on that basis and we don't resource them on that basis."<sup>16</sup> In the C of E's formation criteria for training ordained ministers, particularly the mission, evangelism, and discipleship section, an assumption that this should happen can be made; but it is not clear, and it is dependent on the training institution and training supervisors, and the diocesan approach.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Nick Shepherd (programme director), interview by author (3 July 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Criteria for the Selection for the Ordained Ministry in the Church of England (London: Church House, 2014): [www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/formation\\_criteria\\_for\\_ordained\\_ministry.pdf](http://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/formation_criteria_for_ordained_ministry.pdf). Accessed 27 July 2022.

## 2.1 *Implementation at a Parish Level*

What was also revealed in the learning communities was not only how far back most delegates perceived parish churches were in terms of “discipleship making” but also in terms of how many congregation members were not engaging with basic faith practices. This was affirmed at St Edmund’s with a discipleship survey undertaken in the summer of 2019, as part of the renewal and reform program, and to align training and education with the SGPF project.

In the survey the question “What is the biggest issue for you in your discipleship?” the 18–69-year-olds responded with: “Finding time ...” to “read, study, attend courses and fit everything in.” This age category represents almost half of the regular worshipping community at St Edmund’s.

The Diocese of Leeds, throughout 2017 to 2019 formulated a new and extensive diocesan strategy to embed the newly formed diocese which was established through the merger of three former Dioceses in April 2014. The area includes 2.3 million people and 656 Anglican churches across a wide-ranging geographical area.<sup>18</sup>

The new strategy was influenced by the SGPF program and includes (as one of three foundation stones) “Clergy and lay together—making the most of the diverse gifts of clergy and lay people working in collaboration across the Diocese” and in terms of goals, goal three of five is “Nurturing lay discipleship.”<sup>19</sup> These cover the two required dominant SGPF culture shifts highlighted in the SGPF report.

A digital learning platform was established and launched at the first ever Diocesan Lay Conference, designed to promote lay participation in church and in everyday lives.<sup>20,21</sup> The conference certainly sought to create unrest, in a positive manner, and draw people out of complacency to go back to their parish churches and enthuse their own congregations. This would not be an easy task. Ecclesiastical impulses to self-preservation, together with inclination towards provincialism and parochialism tend to be strong at a parish level, particularly with many long-standing church members who want the church

18 John Carter, *First new Diocese for more than 85 years is created*, Diocese News release (April 16, 2014), <https://www.leedsanglican.org/content/first-new-diocese-more-85-years-created>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

19 Diocese of Leeds, “Objectives and initiatives to support the Diocesan Strategy DS 19 03 06,” 3, 7. <https://www.leedsanglican.org/sites/default/files/DS%2019%2003%2006%20Diocesan%20Strategy%20Objectives%20and%20Initiatives.pdf>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

20 “Together in Faith—Lay Conference 2018”. Diocese of Leeds, conference summary (June 9, 2018), <https://www.leedsanglican.org/lay-conference>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

21 The Digital Learning platform: <https://learning.leedsanglican.org>.

to be as they have always known it. The SGPF implementation plan does stress the need for sustained energy and passion for change!

Establishing Beacon parishes, to promote SGPF in the Diocese, proved much more of a challenge with overly busy clergy suspicious of 'yet another program' and busy laity struggling to find the time to commit to the project. People with families, children and careers tend to be time poor and so have little opportunity to attend additional evening or weekend meetings. Lack of time was one of the major challenges of implementation, alongside the pressures of restructuring at diocesan level, and the parish level engagement with faith practices.

### 3 St Edmund's and the Lived Experience

Within the setting of St Edmund's much had already been taking place in terms of educating the congregation relating to "present-day missiology's concern as a contextual elucidation of the relationship between God, God's world and God's church."<sup>22</sup> A six-month exploration of mission through a project called "mission matters," sought, through sermons, study groups and informative material, to break down the barriers of the term "mission" and reintroduce mission as "God already being in mission in the world and the church is tasked with joining him."<sup>23</sup>

The dawning realization of many in the congregation that finding God in the quotidian matters of daily life, as both a source for worship and a means of living out the good news of Christ in all the world, in service to the world, was a source of encouragement and a new understanding of mission.

In working to break down the barriers to understanding everyday faith, a project involving acquiring anonymous stories from eleven members of the congregation (through each decade age category) captured aspects of their everyday lives and how their faith guided and challenged them. An art installation representing the Last Supper was created with eleven place settings and a story placed at each setting, together with a chair that represented something about each person. The project was originally scheduled for Holy Week but proved so popular it ran until Pentecost. The readers commented on how helpful it was to be able to read about another's faith journey, in their everyday lives, from which they found encouragement and inspiration. The project had the additional bonus of helping to promote bible reading, particularly the

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<sup>22</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 509.

<sup>23</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 251.

gospel narratives and home groups began exploring the New Testament with renewed enthusiasm. In the St Edmund's discipleship survey, 50 per cent of the congregation read their bibles less than once a week, or not at all, outside of Sundays.<sup>24</sup> As a result of this new engagement, two house groups also took the initiative to undertake the Pilgrim discipleship course.<sup>25</sup>

The Pilgrim discipleship course is one of an increasing number of resources the Church of England has been making available to promote the SGPF project. Using the "pilgrim journeys forty days of reflections on the Lord's prayer" opened avenues of prayer and reflection for people and an introduction to primary/practical theological engagement in daily life for many, particularly those new or returning to Church.<sup>26</sup>

St Edmund's had been utilizing the work of Alan Hirsch and the need to address how the church as the people of God engages as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, rather than just as pastors and teachers. The congregation members that engaged found the "Lists of function and possible expressions of callings" particularly helpful in aiding their own understanding of their place within the people of God.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, St Edmund's membership had grown by 50 per cent over a 3.5-year period, particularly families with young children, and much work had been undertaken to reframe ecclesiastical language and practices to better engage with the language of the everyday, with a view to ensuring the newcomers could relate their experiences within the act of worship to their everyday lives.

As part of empowering the laity, the Leeds Diocese introduced a Rhythm of Life to help church members deepen their discipleship journey in practical everyday terms. Early indicators from the St Edmund's congregation were that it was being gratefully received and helping significantly in the understanding and exploration of what it means to have a relationship with God.

For many years now I have run a "Where's God on Monday?" course, which is a simple four week, two hours per week, course seeking to teach participants reflective practice utilizing primary theology. Behind the basic premise is the fact that many workplace/professional occupations have a form of reflective practice, and this course seeks to broaden that practice to engage theologically.

<sup>24</sup> The survey had 130 respondents out of a possible 210 adults.

<sup>25</sup> *Discipleship Pilgrim Course Materials*: <http://www.pilgrimcourse.org>.

<sup>26</sup> Steven Croft, *40 Days of Reflections on The Lord's Prayer* (London: Church House Publishing, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Alan Hirsch, *5Q Reactivating the original intelligence and capacity of the body of Christ* (Columbia: 100M, 2017), 113.

For those that can find the time to engage they often continue to meet as a group to reflect and support each other in workplace situations. This was born out from the original course which was developed for an internship I undertook at Opawa Baptist Church, with Steve Taylor. The participants of that original course continued under the guidance of Taylor as they sought to shape a longer-term exploration of theological engagement of their workplaces.<sup>28</sup> The benefits of the laity (congregation) engaging in theological reflection has become a dominant theme in the lived experience highlighted.

#### 4 Is the Crux of the Challenge One of Theological Engagement?

The SGPF report refers to a “deficit of robust and incisive theological thinking acknowledging that there has been much by the way of thinking around theologies of the laity over the past century but acknowledges that it has had “difficulty achieving long-term currency, let alone significantly informing policy and practice across the Church of England.”<sup>29</sup>

As part of the SGPF project “a theological reflection on the whole church serving God’s mission” has been produced giving some theological starting points to reflect on calling, in all walks of life.<sup>30</sup> However, reflecting on the “Where’s God on Monday?” course (and previous research around liturgical theology and theology of work) when individuals are provided with the tools to start engaging theologically themselves, they are enabled such that they can explore their own relationship between God, the world they inhabit and the church they are part of. The focal point of the SGPF project is to “empower, liberate and disciple the 98 % of the Church of England who are not ordained.” The desired outcome being to ensure that the laity can then live out their vocation, as highlighted by Vatican II: “the laity are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can be the salt of the earth.”<sup>31</sup> To enable this the laity need to be able to have a faith that constantly seeks understanding and enables the exploration of how one has come face to face with God;

28 Steve Taylor is a contributor in this book, writing “Worship, Work and Witness: Action Research in a Local Church,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

29 Archbishops’ Council, *Setting God’s People Free*, 14.

30 The Church of England, *Calling all God’s People, A theological reflection on the whole church serving God’s mission* (London: Church House Publishing, 2019).

31 “Lumen Gentium,” in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 250.

experiences the spirit of God and the gifts of God. Only then can “every lay person, through those gifts given to him *be* at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself.”<sup>32</sup>

A regular act of worship is generally the consistent interaction point for congregation members (laity) and the connection between that adoration (act of worship) and the resultant sending out to action needs to be explored, not least with worship being “the experiential foundation of theological reflection.”<sup>33</sup> The believers need space, guidance and opportunity for theological reflection on that adoration (church service/liturgy) and action (work/being-in-the world) and then the necessary opportunities to respond to the findings of those reflections.<sup>34</sup>

It is proposed here that, rather than an overarching theology of the laity, what is required is a laity empowered with their own theological practices. Clergy and church leaders require robust frameworks to train and educate the laity in exploring their encounters with God in the workplace and everyday life. Cosden's theology of work as “a transformative activity that consists of interrelated instrumental, relational and ontological dimensions” together with Volf's “Work in the Spirit” and the underlying focus that “theologians need to learn how people go about doing their work and how they come to interpret it” provide such frameworks.<sup>35,36</sup>

Rather than a theology of the laity, a laity empowered with their own theological practices will enable them to renew all that makes up the temporal order “personal and family values, culture, economic interests, the trades and professions, institutions of the political community, international relations, and so on”<sup>37</sup> such that “the church is understood not as an institution but as a people to whom God communicates in love.”<sup>38</sup>

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32 “Lumen Gentium,” in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 250.

33 Aidan Kavanagh, OSB, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN, USA: Liturgical Press, 1992), 78.

34 For an in-depth analysis of this premise see Miroslav Volf, “Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the World,” in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, edited by D. A. Carson, 203–211 (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

35 Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work, Work and the New Creation* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 178.

36 Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit, Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 25.

37 Excerpts from “Apostolicam Actuositatem” (1965), Art. 2, 6, 7, in VC2, 768, 773–75, in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 252.

38 “Lumen Gentium,” in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 250.



#### 4.1 *The Laity, Theological Praxis, and the Holy Spirit*

A laity empowered through their own theological practices requires an enabling of the laity such that they acquire a confident understanding of how they engage with the Holy Spirit and explore that theologically. While seemingly a straightforward statement, my observations of human experience, lived out in broad-church settings raised concerns regarding how the Holy Spirit is perceived within congregations. Fear of the unknown is a common place reaction and the concept of being “filled with Holy Spirit” is perceived with significant suspicion.

God's grace as a gift is a much more acceptable and a less daunting concept. In journeying with laity at St Edmund's a more empowering outcome has been achieved with this starting point. Reaffirming that the Christian faith is a gift from God, by His Grace, provides language that is more comprehensible. McGhee captures the essence, in that “humanity exists in relation with God by virtue of its election and incorporation in Jesus Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>39</sup>

The sense of needing to do something to obtain the Holy Spirit is a difficult place to take people beyond. Exploring the concept of the Holy Spirit holding the key to the Christians life such that “the secret of the whole Christian life is passivity in relation to the Spirit of God (*and*) the Spirit is the source both of adoration ([Ephesians] 5:18–20) and action (5:21–6:20)” allows explorations into what is happening in congregational worship and everyday life and how one comes face to face with God in adoration and action.<sup>40</sup>

There is no room for complacency in enabling this journey and there is much by the way of unrest along the way, as I have experienced with St Edmund's. However, where understanding arises such that liturgical practices and daily activities are perceived through the lens of adoration and action (and times of passivity) and not of a supernatural or “otherworldly” basis, then the believer is freed to see these things anew through receiving and being shaped by the Holy Spirit. It may sound contradictory but nevertheless creating a frame of reference for the individual grounded in their own daily settings allows a journey where the individual begins to recognize that the Holy Spirit works in “ordinary human behaviour, joining and sharing, eating and drinking, listening and caring, testing and deciding, welcoming and befriending”.<sup>41</sup> The believer then sees and experiences these things anew through receiving and being shaped by the

39 Myk Habets, ed., *The Spirit of Truth* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 203.

40 D.A. Carson, ed., *Worship: Adoration and Action* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 211.

41 Darrell L. Guder ed., *Missional Church, A Vision for the sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 181.



Holy Spirit, not through fear of some strange concept but through recognition that the Holy Spirit, as a gift from God, is part of our very being. As Kavanagh states from the liturgical aspect, "thus is faith kept as something always alive in the present ... thus is divine purpose served in the real world of whatever epoch" and "thus is the Gift always given and received."<sup>42</sup>

Taking congregation members on a journey that explores adoration, based around Sunday worship, and action, based around daily life, with passivity towards the Holy Spirit, through theological exploration enabled many at St Edmund's to a greater understanding of living out the good news of Christ in all the world, in service to the world.

Creating settings where a constructive understanding of the Holy Spirit arises so that "the church is understood not as an institution but as a people to whom God communicates in love" proves liberating.<sup>43</sup> There is much to do to engage the whole church community in this journey and fear and complacency is a significant issue.

#### 4.2 *The Laity, Theological Practice and Mission: Service (Diakonia) and Witness (Evangelism)*

When setting out the missiological challenge at the beginning of this chapter, the example was given of how there are those at St Edmund's (and in every church I have been part of across the last thirty years) who when they hear the word mission will immediately think of a person sent overseas to convert those without knowledge of Christianity or a church mission week involving often painful and embarrassing memories of going into the local community to "convert" people. Hendrik Kraemer judges missions since the eighteenth century as "crippled, amputated mission" in their preoccupations with missionary specialists.<sup>44</sup> In short, this all-too-common understanding, is that mission is for the specialists, not the church attending laity.

During the explorations of mission at St Edmund's it became clear that the congregation were comfortable with the concept of mission as service (diakonia); serving the world they inhabit and while they had not initially understood mission in this way, the dawning realization was liberating. Not only that, but they were in the main keen and eager to undertake these acts of service. Many examples could be given by congregation members of how they served in this way. It became clear that this congregation recognized the call to serve in the world and were comfortable, in the main, in doing so, within their own

42 Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 95.

43 "Lumen Gentium," in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 250.

44 Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 248.

contexts. Following the example of the good Samaritan in loving your neighbour as yourself.

St Edmund's had a significant social action program and large numbers of the congregation were involved in different projects. During the coronavirus pandemic St Edmund's managed the coordination of some 300 volunteers, from both church and community, in conjunction with the local council, to deliver food, medication, support and listening services where needed, to a pollution of 25,000. It was a significant witness to the wider community, so many of whom had no idea the church would be involved in such activities. This aroused much by the way of curiosity and instigated exploratory conversations from non-church volunteers.

It is also clear that the Church of England engages in social action projects on a large scale, as 16,000 churches supported 35,000 projects, with an estimated contribution to society of £12.4 billion in 2018, according to an independent study.<sup>45</sup>

The missiological context of this exploration is to always be aware that *missio Dei*, God's mission, is that which the whole people of God are to be part of, recognizing that God is at work in the world outside of the church as well as with the church. From the above examples, both at St Edmund's and nationally, it is clear the people of God are at work *in* the world—but are they finding one-half of the Great Commission much easier to engage with?

Tom Holland, in his study of the formation of the western mind, captures the crux of the dichotomy: "Always, from the very beginning of the Church, there has been tension between Christ's commandments to his followers that they should go into the world and preach the good news to all creation, and his parable of the Good Samaritan."<sup>46</sup>

And again: "Fundamental to the rethinking of the church's mission is a recovery of the apostolic understanding that all Christian are called to witness and service."<sup>47</sup> It is becoming increasingly evident at St Edmund's that this call to serve was being undertaken, even if it was not necessarily understood as being part of mission. There is a growing comfortableness with the concept of diakonia (service) for all, however evangelism (witness) is not as

45 Harriet Sherwood, "Churches Tally up their Value to Society—at £12.4bn," *The Guardian* (18 October 2020) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/18/churches-tally-up-their-value-to-society-at-124bn>. Accessed 27 July 2022.

46 Tom Holland, *Dominion, The Making of the Western Mind* (London: Little, Brown, 2019), 503.

47 Excerpts from Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 135, 147, 149, 154; in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 248.

easily understood or engaged with. It has been similar in reason to mission, again “something the experts do to someone else.” The six-month exploration of mission and subsequent theological explorations at St Edmund's led me to the conclusion that witness and service had, in general, become too compartmentalized in the minds of the church members.

This issue is in no way unique to St Edmunds and the Edinburgh 2010 “Centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910” talked explicitly about witness and evangelism and linked the two with incarnational diakonia.

The editorial Introduction of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series captures well the need for diakonia and evangelism to belong together as “two blades on a pair of scissors.”<sup>48</sup> Going on to explain that “this is not just a matter of doing evangelism and *diakonia* in balance alongside each other” and expounding thus: “evangelism and proclamation have social and diaconal consequences as we call people to discipleship and to be salt and light in all areas of life. And *diakonia* and social involvement have evangelistic consequences as we demonstrate faith in action and witness transformation.”<sup>49</sup>

There is a need to see the two as part of the one whole, not a dualism which values one more than the other, but rather recognition that the two functions belong together, “the sharing of our whole being so that all can enjoy life on earth and for eternity.”<sup>50</sup> This is language and context that both opens up Bosch's present-day missiological task to explore “the relationship between God, God's people and God's Church”<sup>51</sup> and enables us to grasp the following: “When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. For “here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that is offered up to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means.”<sup>52</sup>

At St Edmund's I observed this in action with families with young children, seeking to help others like themselves, sharing with them, and being with them as equals; inviting them to church support groups that they enjoyed, and had been helped by, and in due course attending church services. Their aim was not to increase the size of the congregation at St Edmund's but rather to walk with those in a similar situation with similar challenges and struggles: being

48 Dowsett, Phiri et.al., eds, *Evangelism and Diakonia in Context* (Oxford: Regnum, 2015), 1.

49 Dowsett et.al, *Evangelism and Diakonia in Context*, 1.

50 Dowsett et.al, *Evangelism and Diakonia in Context*, 33.

51 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 509.

52 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium, Apostolic Exhortation* (London: St Paul's, 2013), 9–10 [The Joy of the Gospel].

with each other. If I had tried to explain to them that they had acted in service and witness, it would, in all probability, have been a surprise.

This is “the laity, living in the world as an integral part of it ... the primary body through which the reality of the phrase: the church *is* diakonia, *is* Ministry”<sup>53</sup> and is witnessing as the living demonstration “of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world”.<sup>54</sup>

The need to enable the laity the time and opportunity to develop their own theological practices and to explore and recognize that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, as part of their very being, is key to empowering a laity who serve and witness to the world.

## 5 The Way Forward for the People of God

The Church of England parish church comes in many and varied traditions from Conservative evangelical to Anglo-Catholic and most things in between. Different traditions will view the SGPF project through different lenses. However, if each tradition embraces the concept of a laity empowered with their own theological practices, this should allow cultural change regardless of the parish church tradition or setting. Ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation, provincialism and parochialism runs deep within the very being of the institution but through re-engaging with a focus on the laity the Church of England can create the possibility of refocusing on that very laity as the people of God: “Gathered together in the People of God and established in the one Body of Christ under one head, the laity—no matter who they are and thus share in the “salvific mission of the church.”<sup>55</sup>

That salvific mission of the church is “seen in terms not of an established church but a ‘pilgrim people’, constantly on the move into the world” and functioning as the salt of the earth.<sup>56</sup>

The SGPF report highlights that there have been long-term difficulties in establishing a theology of the laity that will significantly inform policy and practice in the Church of England. The findings through this chapter support the proposal that this is the wrong focus and that rather than a theology of the laity, a laity with their own theological practices is paramount. The overriding

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53 Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 248.

54 Dowsett et.al, *Evangelism and Diakonia in Context*, 32.

55 “Lumen Gentium,” in Thomas ed., *Readings in World Mission*, 250.

56 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 664.

lived experience highlighted has been the need for the laity to be empowered with their own theological practices, that will enable them to renew all that makes up the temporal order. In essence, providing the very foundations required to address “present-day missiology’s concern as a contextual elucidation of the relationship between God, God’s world, and God’s church.”<sup>57</sup>

The whole SGPF project is a long-term project with much to be addressed with the remodelling of clergy selection, training, and ongoing ministerial development being key to addressing many of Bosch’s “gadfly” points. How the clergy do and do not engage will be a dominant factor in the culture shifts and whether they are achieved.

The July 2019 Synod, in reviewing the progress to date on the SGPF project carried a motion to “call on the Archbishop’s council to maintain a focus on this as a strategic priority throughout the next quinquennium.”<sup>58</sup> Given the paradigm culture shifts required in the proposal it is highly likely that the project requires focus to be maintained across many decades until the culture shifts are embedded.

The aim of this chapter was to look for signs and phenomena that foster a rediscovery of the “apostolate of the laity” in the Church of England, based on lived experience. Signs and phenomena have been demonstrated, at a local and national level, and the General Synod’s progress review in 2019 passed the motion to “call on the Archbishop’s council, the house of Bishops, and the Dioceses to drive forward the changes in culture the report demands.”<sup>59</sup> This is a reassuring commitment. Yet my experience in assisting with the dissemination of the program has highlighted significant challenges. It is imperative that the required changes in culture develop such that the laity become “the primary body” and not the institution, which must oppose “every ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation.”<sup>60</sup>

This is only the beginning of a long journey to rediscover the apostolate of the laity and enable “transformation of profound proportions to manifest itself in church and society.”<sup>61</sup>

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57 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 509.

58 Davies, Becket, & Wyatt, “General Synod”.

59 Davies, Becket, & Wyatt, “General Synod”.

60 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 508.

61 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 481.

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**PART 3**

*Ministry of Laity*





## Introduction to Part 3

In baptism, all of God's people are called into mission. Baptism gives the whole people of God a vocation, as "primary bearers of mission".<sup>1</sup> The whole people of God find themselves already sent, already present as God's witness in work and daily life. The whole people of God are not the light. Rather they are reflectors of the light, each a unique mirror of the warmth of God's presence.<sup>2</sup>

Ministry of the laity as an area of theological insight is proposed by Adler and Katoneene in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. It is also present in Bosch's "Mission as Ministry by the Whole people of God". However we choose to re-order how Bosch constructs his "Mission as Ministry by the Whole people of God". Rather than lead with "The Evolution of Ordained Ministry, followed by the "Apostolate of the Laity", we lead with ministry of the laity.<sup>3</sup> We see this as centering of the priesthood of all believers. The result is a laity formed for ministry.

The chapters in this section examine the theological foundations and development of resources for Christian workers across a range of professional and other vocational spheres outside of those trained for professional ministry.

Kenneth Barnes discusses several initiatives which seek to overcome the Sunday/Monday divide. Barnes' goal is to help make the intersections of faith, work and economics less frightening to pastors and their congregations. When we first started planning this volume, Barnes suggested to us that any academic discipline can create a *lingua franca* that is well understood by the guild while subconsciously warding off amateurs less *au fait* with parochial jargon. This can happen for theologians and economists and contribute to the hesitancy of both groups to meet in the crucible of praxis. But as Barnes highlights, the two disciplines share common interests, especially in questions of discipleship, stewardship and economic justice. Barnes helpfully points to groups such as Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, Ridley College in Melbourne, the Mockler Centre at Gordon-Conwell, and the Made to Flourish and Oikonomia Network's Economic Wisdom Project and how they are helping articulate in plain language the connections between faith, work and mission.

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- 1 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 20th Anniversary edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 483.
  - 2 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, "Laity", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 664 [658–664].
  - 3 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478–485.

Continuing the theme outlined by Bosch of mission as ministry of the whole people of God, Andrew Sloane considers the field of medical practitioners as a vocation. In his chapter he focuses on the demands and needs of doctors as a test case suggesting that because professions have inherent moral form these professionals need to be morally and theologically formed. He further argues that the church is a moral and *missional* community that has a responsibility to its professionals as they practice their ministries. Sloane closes the chapter reflecting on how the virtues and practices inherent in professional medicine enterprises are both sustained by particular forms of (missional) Christian community and function as expressions of them in service of vulnerable people. The impetus of *missio Dei* underpins our lives and vocations and as Sloane artfully suggests: "Faithful presence is fundamental to our missional calling and finds particular expression in the work of the professions.

Kara Martin contends that to ensure the whole people of God are disciplined and prepared for ministry, we need to clarify what key cognitive, behavioural and affective constructs need to be formed in workplace Christians to enable them to be missionally effective. Recognizing that research in this area is inadequate, Martin applied an innovative empirical analysis of characteristics needing to be formed in Christian doctors and teachers. Martin's quest was a twofold venture of what and how. She sought first to determine what necessary knowledge, skills, and values were required followed by considering how we prepare workers of faith to influence society and culture. Results from Martin's research reveal that the common denominator is the need for a deep spiritual formation. Like Sloane, she suggests that while this formation is part of the church's responsibility, it needs to go further. Christian schools, theological colleges, professional Christian fellowships and university groups can all invest in activities that form the people of God to influence society and culture.

Besides chaplaincy, Christians also embody their faith in the world by contributing through active service or thoughtful reflection in social services. For example, David Fagg researched and interviewed 30 lay Christians working as youth workers in secular workplaces. Youth work is a fascinating case study of a vocation that often has a faith background, and for which Christian youth workers often have a deep sense of calling, but in which they usually navigate sensitive territory culturally and ethically. What does the Christian faith look like when working in such a context? Fagg explains how faith expression takes place as collectively youth workers represent the wider church, exercising ethical and collegiate practice, praying, and talking about faith.

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# Faith, Work and Economics: a Mission to the Church, a Mission of the Church

*Kenneth J. Barnes*

## Abstract

The Bible has far more to say about work, money, business ethics, economic justice, and stewardship than it does about heaven, hell and sexual ethics combined. Yet, most pastors are either ill equipped, or unwilling to address these issues for a wide variety of reasons. There is also a persistent theological divide between things that are considered ‘sacred’ and things ‘secular’. What is sometimes known as the ‘Sunday–Monday divide’, is well documented, and often seen as a laity problem when in fact, it is a clerical problem as well. This, however, need no longer be the case as seminaries, theological colleges, parachurch organizations and even some congregations themselves have developed programs, centres, courses, learning tools, blogs, books, periodicals, and qualifications designed specifically to “encourage, engage and empower”<sup>1</sup> pastors and congregations alike to embrace issues relating to faith, work and economics. This chapter highlights some of the more interesting and effective efforts from America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and beyond, in a way that is designed to make issues relating to faith, work and economics more accessible and less daunting to clergy and their congregations.

## Keywords

Faith at work – economics – flourishing – seminaries – church – ethics – virtue – missiology

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1 This was the original tag-line for the Ridley College Marketplace Institute (c. 2013).

## 1 Introduction

It is difficult to say when a missional emphasis on the areas of faith and work began in earnest, but there are several reasonable places to begin one's inquiry. In his 2007 book, *God at Work: The History and the Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, Princeton academic David W. Miller identifies what he calls 'three waves' of the modern phenomenon, beginning with the Social Gospel era (c. 1890s–1945); which gave way to the Ministry of the Laity era (c. 1945–1985); and the more nascent Faith at Work era (1985–present).<sup>2</sup> The latest epoch, he noted, was the result of a constellation of factors, some spiritual and some socio-economic. Having survived the disruptions of business process re-engineering, mergers and acquisitions, leverage buy-outs, and the 'boom and bust' cycles of the 1980s, there emerged, in American business circles especially, a heightened interest in spirituality and 'meaning and purpose' in the workplace. This was then coupled with the rise of White Evangelical Christianity with its Reformed (Calvinist) roots and 'Protestant Ethic',<sup>3</sup> as both a religious and a socio-economic force within the United States. Based on a belief that free-markets and liberal democracy were more consistent with biblical principles than closed economic systems and totalitarian governments, the American model spread across much the English-speaking church.

The so-called "movement" (Miller's term), has proven to be mercurial and is so unstructured and uncoordinated that it may more accurately be described as a phenomenon than a movement *per se*. Miller himself describes it as a combination of "relatively independent developments"<sup>4</sup> loosely defined by certain characteristics, including a "growing interest by businesspeople in bringing marketplace issues and religious, spiritual, and ethical teachings into conversation with each other".<sup>5</sup> He also noted that at the time of his writing, the theological academy had largely shunned the phenomenon, and had in many circles been hostile toward business and neo-liberal economics; the natural effect being that: "the church in general seem(ed) uninterested in, unaware of,

2 David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195314809.001.0001/acprof-9780195314809-chapter-1>.

3 The term 'Protestant Ethic' refers to the socio-religious phenomenon codified by German sociologist Max Weber in: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).

4 Miller, *God at Work*, <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195314809.001.0001/acprof-9780195314809-chapter-5>.

5 Miller, *God at Work*, chapter 1.

or unsure of how to help the laity integrate their faith identities and teachings with their workplace occupations, problems, and possibilities.”<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the missional emphasis on faith and work was driven by Christians in the marketplace themselves, with an emphasis on four areas of concern, which Miller identifies as: “ethics, evangelism, experience, and enrichment, or the Four E’s.”<sup>7</sup>

A myriad of organizations were formed around the time of this so-called ‘third wave’, but there were many already in existence. They included (merely as a representative sampling)<sup>8</sup> organizations such as:

The Christian Business Men’s Connection (CBMC), which began in 1930 as a prayer rally in the Downtown section of Chicago, IL. The idea of people taking time off from their business activities to pray became very popular and soon chapters of the movement were cropping up in other major U.S. cities. In the 1970s however, the emphasis changed from a time of mass prayer to a ministry of personal discipleship and one-on-one mentoring,<sup>9</sup> a widely attested evolution during this timeframe.

Then there was the Fellowship of Christian Companies for Christ (now known as FCCI), a group of Christian business owners and senior executives, dedicated to helping “Christian business leaders ... operate their businesses and conduct their personal lives in accordance with Biblical principles.”<sup>10</sup>

Around the same time, two well established campus ministries: Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru)<sup>11</sup> and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship<sup>12</sup> began to expand their work from college and university campuses into the marketplace, the latter concentrating on students from the top American business schools.

In London, John Stott (All Souls, Langham Place) created the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC). “Through innovative programmes like Christians in the Modern World, LICC taught hundreds of Christians in all

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6 Miller, *God at Work*, chapter 5.

7 Miller, *God at Work*, chapter 4.

8 There are hundreds of Faith at Work and Business as Mission organizations. For some useful lists, readers may wish to visit: <https://businessasmission.com/library/links/> and/or <https://centerforfaithandwork.com/article/faith-work-ministries-list>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

9 The flagship program of CBMC is “Operation Timothy” (<https://www.cbmc.com/history>). Accessed 16 October 2020.

10 <https://fcci.org/about-us/#history>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

11 <https://www.cru.org>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

12 <https://intervarsity.org>. Accessed 16 October 2020.



walks of life across the world how to navigate a vast range of issues and live and make an impact as whole-life followers of Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, Cambridge University scholar, Richard Higginson started Faith in Business (FiB), with a particular emphasis on business ethics. The centerpiece of FiB, is *Faith in Business Quarterly*, a publication that provides “a forum to explore and promote the application of the Christian faith and values to working life in business, the professions, the public and voluntary service.”<sup>14</sup>

In Australia, the City Bible Forum began holding meetings in the central business districts of its major cities, encouraging one of the youngest and most dynamic workforces in the world “to explore the bigger questions about life, faith and purpose.”<sup>15</sup>

Back in the United States, a generous grant from Joanna Mockler, the widow of former Gillette Corporation CEO Coleman Mockler, helped to establish the Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace<sup>16</sup> at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

In Richmond, Virginia, a Gordon-Conwell alumnus by the name of Judson ‘Buddy’ Childress, started a ministry to the business community called Needle’s Eye Ministries, “with a vision to turn the work week into a place of care, ethics, and ministry.”<sup>17</sup> Over 40 years later, Needle’s Eye continues to provide a wide variety of services to business people, via a model that is similar to many such organizations around the United States and the world. Its strategy is simply to:

- Work supportively with individuals, small groups, and wider professional groups to:
- Provide Christ-centered biblical teaching.
- Support and build vibrant small groups through mentoring, counseling, and training.
- Facilitate networking that brings tangible benefits to men and women in career transition.
- Equip young professionals with resources to find their identity, calling, and purpose.
- Share the good news of what God is doing in the workplace.
- Promote the concept of marketplace ministry in partnership with local churches.<sup>18</sup>

13 <https://licc.org.uk/about/#history>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

14 <https://fibq.org>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

15 <https://citybibleforum.org>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

16 <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-workplace-ethics/>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

17 <https://www.needleseye.org/aboutus>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

18 <https://www.needleseye.org/aboutus>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

It is not hard to recognize Miller's 'Four E's' in this model, nor is it hard to see the emphasis on individuals, their work environments, and their local communities. In much the same way that Evangelical Christianity is highly de-centralized, and emphasizes the need for individuals to make 'personal' commitments to Christ, most of the organizations operating during the 'third wave' have traditionally operated outside the auspices of the local church and theological academy, and focused on helping individual Christians in the marketplace, with little emphasis on ecclesiology, missiology or macro-economic issues. All that changed however, with two unrelated events that unfolded in New York City: the establishment of the Center for Faith and Work at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, and the catastrophic Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

## 2 Faith, Work and the Local Church

The story of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (RPC) in New York City is a genuine church planting success story. Started in the Spring of 1989 by Tim Keller and a core group of fifteen people, it set out specifically to start "a new church in the heart of Manhattan for professional New Yorkers ... a church that was open to people who were seeking answers regarding their faith, and where they felt secure in bringing their friends who were sceptical about matters of faith."<sup>19</sup> New York City in the 1980s had become a bastion of material excess, and post-modern relativism. The flamboyant, 'greed is good', hedonism of Wall Street had reduced religious belief and practice to a kind of quaint neo-Romanticism, and Evangelical Christianity with its audacious truth claims seemed especially irrelevant, or so it seemed to some. Against this backdrop, Keller and his team, created an atmosphere of humility, hospitality and openness. His approach to apologetics was low-key and relational. He preached the Good News as exactly that—good news that is affirming, life-giving, irresistible, and relevant to every area of life, including one's work. It was a mission church in every sense of the word, and today, is a network of dozens of campuses, church plants, partnerships and ministries that literally spans the globe.

The reasons for Redeemer's success are many, but chief among them, was its early commitment to the Faith at Work concept. As Katherine Leary Alsdorf explains in the Forward to *Every Good Endeavor*—a best-selling book she co-authored with Keller—she was asked to start the Center in 1989, the very first year of the church's existence. While strong believers in the "concept,"

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19 [https://www.redeemer.com/learn/about\\_us/redeemer\\_history](https://www.redeemer.com/learn/about_us/redeemer_history). Accessed 16 October 2020.

however, the leadership of RPC was not particularly enamored of the so-called Faith at Work movement. As they explain in the book, the plethora of theological traditions represented across the movement, created a confusing cacophony of theological voices, each claiming to be the “main way to serve God at work.”<sup>20</sup> Redeemer took a different approach, deciding instead, to embrace (or at least give due consideration) to many different viewpoints, in order to engage with the culture around them, in ways that resonated with people living in a complex cosmopolitan city, while remaining true to traditional Christianity’s essential beliefs.

In this and many other ways, the emphasis of RPC’s mission to the marketplace began to shift away from the so-called Four E’s to an emphasis on what has become known as ‘full-life discipleship,’ based on a theology of work that is God-centered, affirming and central to both the *imago Dei* and the *missio Dei*. As Keller and Leary Alsdorf put it:

The book of Genesis leaves us with a striking truth—work was part of paradise ... Work did not come in after a golden age of leisure. It was part of God’s perfect design for human life, because we were made in God’s image, and part of his glory and happiness is that he works, as does the Son of God, who said, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working” (John 5.17).<sup>21</sup>

The integration of faith and work is not tertiary to the ‘real’ ministry of RPC (i.e. κήρυγμα [*kerygma*], διδασχή [*Didache*], κοινωνία [*koinonia*], and διακωνία [*diakonia*]); it is integral to every ministry of the church. It is part of their DNA. One need only visit the Center’s section of the church’s webpage to see how integrated it is into the life of the church and its people. There are fellowship and support groups for people based on their respective industries, and there are adult education classes, blogs, newsletters, social events and conferences scheduled throughout the year; but not all of what they do is inwardly focused; much of it is outwardly (i.e. missionally) focused.

One unique example is the Gotham Fellowship. Designed as a nine-month educational intensive for young professionals, it seeks to train Christians to impact the City and the marketplace with the ‘fullness of the Gospel.’ Fellows are immersed in theological classics from Calvin to Kuyper and spiritually nurtured through a combination of mentoring relationships, daily practices, and

20 Timothy Keller, with Katherine Leary-Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012).

21 Keller with Leary-Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*.

projects, all with the intention of seeking the common good of the City. For those unable to commit to the Gotham Fellowship, they offer a series of short-courses and other cohort activities, as well as a summer intensive, and access to countless books, articles, guest speakers and other relevant resources.<sup>22</sup>

This missional model is now being replicated all over the world via Redeemer City to City (CTC):

a non-profit organization that prayerfully recruits, trains, coaches and resources leaders who cultivate gospel movements in global cities primarily through church planting. CTC is based in New York City and works in over 140 global cities throughout Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, Latin America, the Middle East and Europe. CTC's core competencies are urban church planting, leadership development and content creation. All of this is done to help bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to cities.<sup>23</sup>

While it is difficult to quantify the impact of RPC's church-based / missional approach to faith and work, it has certainly spawned other organizations that use many of the same tools to equip congregations and their pastors, as they seek to impact their own cities and towns (including suburban and rural communities) with the 'fullness of the Gospel.'

One such organization is Made to Flourish, a self-described "pastor's network for the common good,"<sup>24</sup> that evolved out of Christ Community Church in St. Louis, Missouri.

Under the leadership of its president, Tom Nelson and the generous support of the Kern Family Foundation, Made to Flourish has built a vibrant network of churches, each dedicated to the same mission, that is itself built upon specific 'theological foundations' or 'foundational beliefs'.

They are:

1. The biblical story (i.e. the biblical meta-narrative of creation, fall, redemption and consummation);
2. The mission of God (i.e. specifically the duty of believers to "serve as ambassadors of reconciliation and live as agents of redemption");
3. Personal wholeness (i.e. "the formation of our whole person into Christ-likeness");
4. The inherent goodness of work (i.e. the belief that "engaging in work that leads to human flourishing is a primary way we image God");

<sup>22</sup> <http://faithandwork.com>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

<sup>23</sup> <https://redeemercitytocity.com/about>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.madetoflourish.org/about/>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

5. Economic wisdom (i.e. the conviction that “(e)conomic systems should be grounded in human dignity and moral character”), and lastly;
6. The local church (seen as “uniquely designed and empowered to promote human flourishing”).<sup>25</sup>

In order to support this mission, they have developed a series of tools designed to make issues surrounding faith, work and economic wisdom<sup>26</sup> more accessible to clergy and laity alike. They include numerous books and articles by Christian economists and businesspeople that explain the ‘nuts and bolts’ of economic activity without resorting to the aforementioned *lingua franca* of the guild. One need not delve into the intricacies of ‘efficient market theory’, to explain the immorality of price-gouging; or the complexities of debt theories of money to expound the virtue of thrift. Nor does one need to understand ‘labor theory of value’ or ‘psychology of working theory’ to appreciate the extra-economic benefits of doing work, whether paid or unpaid, that is meaningful and purposeful in its own right.

In addition to print and other materials, including its own YouTube™ channel, Made to Flourish hosts a series of events, both local and national, specifically targeting local church pastors. They even host Pastoral Residencies, noting that:

Just as teaching hospitals provide real-life experience for young, talented doctors, a pastoral residency provides an irreplaceable learning laboratory for seminary graduates to grow in leadership, preaching, administration, and godly character. Pastoral residents are given responsibility, mentored by senior leaders, and prepared for life-long success in pastoral ministry.<sup>27</sup>

The impetus behind these residencies is the conviction that:

(w)ork is a primary way Christians join together in the mission of God to make all things new. Unless pastors understand this important truth, the church will have embraced an impoverished gospel, and will be

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.madetoflourish.org/about#principles>. Accessed 6 April 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Use of the term ‘economic wisdom’ is designed to distinguish what is commonly and historically known as ‘political economy’ from the modern, academic, mathematical modeling discipline of ‘economics’.

<sup>27</sup> Made to Flourish, “Pastoral Residencies,” <https://www.madetoflourish.org/what-we-do/pastoral-residencies>. Accessed 6 April 2021.

handicapped in its effectiveness to influence people and culture for the common good.<sup>28</sup>

As they rightly note on their website:

Most pastors lack practical training in economics. They may have a commitment to justice or charity, but don't know how to equip their congregations to expand opportunity, create capacity, or connect virtue formation to everyday work in the economy. As a result, most congregation members do not know how economic participation is connected with their faith. As pastors become equipped to integrate faith, work, and economic wisdom, congregants can embrace a new perspective on work and the economy that will transform the way they engage their communities.<sup>29</sup>

This continuing shift in focus from the marketplace itself, to the local church, has also captured the imagination of many schools of theology and theological seminaries. For example, in Melbourne, Australia, Ridley College, a small Evangelical seminary of the Anglican Church in Australia, recognized that both ordinands and pastors *in situ* were lacking, not only in biblical and theological fluency but practical knowledge, as they relate to the integration of faith and work *in praxis*. With the financial support of Converge International, and the encouragement of the local Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, they established the Marketplace Institute, whose purpose was to “change the way individuals, churches and church leaders view the nature of work”; and this purpose was to be achieved by “transforming individuals, communities, churches, business interests and the marketplace ... (through) research, teaching, consulting and engagement.”<sup>30</sup>

In actuality, this proved to be easier said than done. Curricula were created, conferences held, talks given, and papers written; however, when the Institute tried to roll out a unique parish-based program called ‘Take Your Pastor to Work’ there was considerable resistance from local clergy. Some clergy were also resistant to the idea of integrating faith and work into their ministries because they did not see the point of it. What does someone’s everyday life have to do with their state of grace? What is sacerdotal about workplace ministry?

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28 Made to Flourish, “Pastoral Residencies”.

29 Made to Flourish, “Pastoral Residencies”.

30 Job posting for the position of Dean, Marketplace Institute (2013).

What is the eschatological benefit of something as temporal as worldly work? Despite the efforts of serious scholars in the field, including Melbourne-based Gordon Preece, whose work in this area is unequalled, these pastors lacked a biblically sound theology of work<sup>31</sup> that would require more than just the efforts of a local seminary.

This phenomenon however, was not unique to the Australian context, and was recognized as a serious deficiency several years earlier by Will Messenger, a Harvard Business School graduate and former Director of the aforementioned Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace. As part of his doctoral studies, Messenger envisioned a website that would become the “deepest, largest, and most trusted source of biblical, theological, and pastoral material related to work”<sup>32</sup> in the world; and one that addresses the needs of all interested stakeholders, including: Christians in the workplace, pastors and theological scholars. With the support of Joanna Mockler and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary President Haddon Robinson, as well as senior business leaders, such as Tom Phillips (the former Chairman and CEO of Raytheon Corporation) Messenger’s original ‘Mission Plan for the Theology of Work Project, Inc.’<sup>33</sup> became a reality in 2007 with the launch of the Theology of Work Project (TOW).

From its outset, TOW has been a global enterprise. The original steering committee included scholars, pastors, business people and thought leaders from around the world, and the current Boards (both editorial and trustees) include representatives from the United States, Mexico, Hong Kong, Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. More importantly however, the people who visit and deploy the website’s resources are perhaps the most racially, culturally and theologically diverse group in the world.

It is the construction of the TOW website however, that is truly exceptional and represents a milestone in the evolution of the Faith at Work movement, especially as it relates to pastors and local congregations. The most salient elements of the site are:

1. Ease of navigation and accessibility of information (i.e. the site is very well designed and easy to use, with content broken down into categories

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31 Fortunately, with the encouragement of the local Archdeacon, clergy eventually enrolled in the program.

32 <https://www.theologyofwork.org/about>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

33 This was the actual title of Messenger’s Doctor of Ministry thesis project.

- of use, such as devotionals and commentaries, as well as target audiences, such as the aforementioned workers, pastors, and students);
2. The content itself is of exceptional quality (i.e. they have sourced materials from thought leaders around the world, and developed the only comprehensive biblical commentary devoted specifically to Faith at Work issues).<sup>34</sup>

For example, under the 'Pastors' heading, users find resources on preaching, small groups, worship and other areas of interest that are easy to use and relevant to a minister's everyday activities. They are intellectually stimulating and theologically rigorous, but they are written in a common vernacular with references and illustrations that speak into current cultural contexts. One example among many of these resources is a four-part sermon series by New Zealand-based missiologist, Alistair Mackenzie on the life of the biblical patriarch Joseph, from the Book of Genesis.<sup>35</sup> While more than capable of taking a deep dive into the text and constructing a complex theological picture of Joseph's place in the biblical meta-narrative, Mackenzie presents him as more than just an historical character and progenitor of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but chooses instead to portray him as a kind of arch-type for anyone wrestling with their calling, dealing with conflicts, facing ethical dilemmas, dealing with betrayal, and ultimately seeking redemption while manifesting God's grace. He makes the life of Joseph accessible within the context of workplace issues, and does so in a way that is theologically sound, but contextually relevant.

There are other useful resources under the Pastors heading as well, including a plethora of worship materials, including prayers, liturgies, hymns, readings, and commissioning services, all dedicated to faith and work issues.

The most evidently unique, and the most important, tool developed by TOW however, is surely the *Theology of Work Study Bible*, which, as the website states:

is the only commentary covering what every book of the Bible says about work. Approximately 2 million Christians who work, pastors, scholars, and others access it free online every year. Covering almost 1000 passages of Scripture, it incorporates a wealth of applications, examples, and illustrations in formats ranging from video and audio to pictures and text.

34 TOW Project, "The Theology of Work Bible Commentary," <https://www.theologyofwork.org/resources/the-theology-of-work-bible-commentary>. Accessed 16 March 2021.

35 Alistair Mackenzie, "Joseph at Work—a Sermon Series by Alistair Mackenzie," <https://www.theologyofwork.org/resources/preach-a-series-on-the-life-of-joseph-that-helps-people-connect-their-faith>. Accessed 16 October 2020.



It covers all kinds of work, whether paid or unpaid. It is the core product of the Theology of Work Project.<sup>36</sup>

It is particularly useful for clergy however, because it deals with issues of faith and work in a language they understand—the language of biblical exegesis.

These and many other resources have gone a long way to helping make the intersections of faith and work less frightening to pastors and laity alike. It is only very recently however, that more attention has been paid to the intersection of faith and economics, or more accurately ‘political economy’, and as mentioned earlier, that shift in emphasis was largely the result of the devastating effects of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

### 3 Faith, Work and Economics

As noted in Kenneth J. Barnes’s recently published book, *Redeeming Capitalism*, the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 “was not so much a malady in itself as it was a symptom of a much more serious disease infecting global capitalism. It exposed deep structural and moral fault lines that many people both within and outside the financial sector knew about but chose to ignore”.<sup>37</sup>

Yes, there were many technical issues at play that helped cause the crash, from the misuse of derivatives (particularly collateralized debt obligations), faulty economic models, questionable accounting practices and heavily debt-laden businesses and households; but there was also a perverse ethical principle undergirding the entire system, that laid the groundwork for its failure. That principle is commonly referred to as the ‘Freidman Doctrine’<sup>38</sup> which as the author notes is the foundation upon which ‘post-modern capitalism’<sup>39</sup> is built.

This is not to suggest that prior to the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, Christian and other religious voices were not speaking into the relationship between faith and economics. As noted earlier in this chapter, the Scriptures themselves have much to say about business ethics, and political economy in general; but a

<sup>36</sup> Tow, “The Theology of Work Bible Commentary”.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth J. Barnes, *Redeeming Capitalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> In an article published by the *New York Times Magazine* on September 13, 1970, economist Milton Friedman famously stated that the primary responsibility of a corporate executive is to “make as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom.”

<sup>39</sup> The author defines ‘post-modern capitalism’ as being “devoid of a moral compass and resistant, if not impervious, to ethical constraint” in Barnes, *Redeeming Capitalism*, 18.

specific emphasis on capitalism has naturally been more recent. Some of those voices deserve special attention here.

Since the publication of *Rerum Novarum* by Leo XIII in 1891, so-called “Catholic Social Teaching” has had much to say about the excesses of capitalism, including the economic subjugation of the global South by the global North, the exploitation of workers, usury, wealth inequality, and damage to the environment, to name but a few of the ills addressed. The Roman Catholic Church continues to speak prophetically into this space, as evidenced by the current pope’s encyclical, *Laudato si’* (2015), where Francis I uses the principle of “subsidiarity” as the basis for his demand that nation-states seek the “common-good” above the demands of economic expediency or geo-political gain.

In 1905, the publication of German Sociologist Max Weber’s famous thesis entitled: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*<sup>40</sup> generated heated discussions on the relationship between America’s Puritan roots and its ethos of unbridled wealth creation, that continue to this day. Weber argued forcefully that a religiously inspired ‘this-worldly aestheticism’, built upon a belief that everyone possesses a divine calling to maximize their economic efficiency; coupled with an aversion to worldly pleasure, resulted in an economic engine capable of producing both great wealth and a generally pious society. Giving a prescient warning however, that if divorced from its religious roots, capitalism would lose its ethical moorings, Weber noted that:

Where the fulfillment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all. In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions.<sup>41</sup>

One may argue that the term ‘purely mundane passions’ was a polite way of saying ‘greed’, but the message is still clear. Capitalism is a powerful and efficient tool for the creation of material wealth, but as the author notes in his previously cited work: “Capitalism is a subject, not an object. It possesses no *hypostasis*, no human essence, and imposes no will, but it does reflect the

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40 The first English translation wasn’t until 1930.

41 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 124.

values of the culture in which it resides.”<sup>42</sup> Logically, if a culture is amoral (or even immoral), the form of capitalism that emerges will present serious ethical challenges to people of faith and goodwill.

During the depth of the Cold War, there was little being written about the need to address capitalism’s moral shortcomings from within. Instead, most of the criticism of capitalism came from those diametrically opposed to it, including thought leaders from the Liberation Theology movement, such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Juan Luis Segundo, whose writings and political activities were roundly criticized by the Roman See as blatantly ‘Marxist.’<sup>43</sup>

In 1975 however, a young Evangelical Christian economist from Jesus College Oxford, Donald Hay, (who would go on to become acting Pro-Vice Chancellor) wrote a short but highly influential tract entitled, *A Christian Critique of Capitalism*, that sought not the overthrow of the capitalist system, but its reform along Christian theological lines. Arguing forcefully for a bottom-up approach on the part of Christians themselves, he emphasized the need for a more intentional stewardship of resources; consumptive restraint; radical generosity; and the priority of humanity<sup>44</sup> over mere economic efficiency.<sup>45</sup> Hay’s booklet was effective for several important reasons. Firstly, he had the academic gravitas to demand the attention of serious thought leaders. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, he set out to write a pamphlet that was accessible to non-scholars and appropriate for use in church settings as well.

This academically serious, but widely accessible model has become a mainstay for those wishing to bridge the gap between the academy and the church, and is reflected in several tomes written since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008; three of which are highlighted below.

One of the more interesting and important books on the relationship between faith and political economy is Ian Harper’s *Economics for Life*, which was subsequently named Australian Christian Book of the Year. Despite the fact that Harper is a very serious economist (he currently sits on the Board of the Reserve Bank of Australia and was formerly Dean of the Melbourne Business School), with a distinguished career as a business practitioner (Deloitte), he

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42 Barnes, *Redeeming Capitalism*, 1.

43 It important to note that Liberation Theology and Christian Socialism didn’t die at the hands of Pope John Paul II or his successors. Readers may wish to explore, *The Ideological Weapons of Death; A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (New York: Orbis, 1986) by Franz J. Hinkelammert, or, *The End of Work* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) by John Hughes, as two examples of pre-GCF critiques of capitalism by Christian socialists / Marxists.

44 This is a position that Miroslav Volf would build upon in *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991).

45 Donald Hay, *A Christian Critique of Capitalism* (New York: Grove, 1975), 22.

was able to explain ‘the dismal science’ of economics in clear and concise laymen’s terms. Successfully weaving the fascinating story of how he personally came to faith, with compelling insights into how economics affects virtually every part of our lives (including our faith journeys); he lifted the veil of secrecy and complexity that so often confounds church folk when it comes to the integration of faith and economics. He made it less intimidating and more relevant to Christian workers, pastors and society at large.<sup>46</sup>

Michael Barram’s recent book *Missional Economics: Biblical Justice and Christian Formation*, takes a slightly more academic path to a similar end. Building upon his notion of missional hermeneutics as foundational to one’s understanding of Christian participation in the *missio Dei*; economic justice, wellbeing, and Christian formation, all converge into a process of transforming our economic reasoning.<sup>47</sup>

Lastly, there is Justin Welby’s *Dethroning Mammon*.<sup>48</sup> As odd as it sounds, the current Archbishop of Canterbury is not a theologian *per se*. That is to say, he does not hold a terminal degree in theology and is not widely published. The power of his office however, and his former status as a senior international executive, gives him a unique perspective from which to consider the relationship between faith and economics and Christianity and capitalism in particular. In this book, which was his Lenten devotional for the year, the Archbishop speaks as a ‘poacher turned game-keeper’ (my reference); one who benefited greatly from his time in the world of business, while witnessing the potentially soul-destroying effects of its excesses. Speaking in a combination of theological, pastoral and laymen’s terms he eloquently describes the seductive power of greed and the all-encompassing desires of Mammon. Challenging Christians to resist the siren’s call, he ends with words of hope and encouragement, focusing on the finished work of Christ and the ultimate redemption of a fallen world.

In addition to the many published resources available to those interested in the integration of faith and economics, many of the previously cited Faith at Work centers have expanded into the sphere of political economy, including the recently renamed Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Public Square, Ethos, the LICC, InterVarsity, The Center for Faith at Work (LeTourneau

46 Ian Harper, *Economics for Life* (Melbourne: Acorn, 2011).

47 Michael D. Barram, *Missional Economics: Biblical Justice and Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018).

48 Justin Welby, *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace: The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book*, 2017 (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

University), and Made to Flourish, to name but a few. Perhaps the most advanced undertaking however, is the Oikonomia Network's Economic Wisdom Project.

The Economic Wisdom Project, like everything done by the Oikonomia Network, is designed to equip theological educators and seminaries to "raise(sic) up church leaders who help people develop whole-life discipleship, fruitful work and economic wisdom for God's people and God's world."<sup>49</sup> As they state in their vision document, what they do is predicated upon the belief that:

The economy is a moral system. What kind of economy we have will depend on what kind of people we are; and what kind of people we are is also impacted by what kind of economy we have (Proverbs 28:20). The foundation of a flourishing economy is the work of free and virtuous people. Their virtue moves them to productivity and service to others; because they act freely, their social cooperation enhances their personal dignity rather than diminishing it. The Fall affects this social system at both the individual and structural levels, but the underlying pattern remains. An economy that prioritizes productive service and opportunity will help cultivate love, joy, and contentment (Psalm 112:3–5). An economy that prioritizes short-term gratification will tend to produce shallow, selfish people (Luke 12:15–21).<sup>50</sup>

It is a bold statement and an ambitious vision, but they support their mission by creating quality content, and referring people to resources outside their own network. It is a clearing-house for all things relating to faith and economics, and it serves as a useful model for other like-minded organizations.

#### 4 Faith, Work and Economics as Mission: a Theological Reflection

All of the above referenced resources and many others not mentioned here, have changed the landscape of interaction between the marketplace, the academy, and the church, and neither pastors nor lay people need to fear these conversations any longer. On the contrary, knowing how central work and economic activity are to a theologically sound understanding of both the *imago*

<sup>49</sup> <https://oikonomianetwork.org/about/who-we-are/>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Oikonomia Network, "A Christian Vision for Flourishing Communities," <https://oikonomianetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Christian-Vision-for-Flourishing-Communities.pdf>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

*Dei* and the *missio Dei*, one would hope that clergy and laity alike will avail themselves of these resources, and integrate them into the mission of the church. Failure to do so would be, in the words of the aforementioned Tom Nelson, “pastoral malpractice,”<sup>51</sup> and one suspects he would not be alone in that thinking.

As Adler and Katoneene rightly note:

The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories and shops, offices and farms, in political parties, government agencies and countless homes; in the press, radio, television, and in the relationship between nations. It is often said that the church should go into these spheres, but the church is in fact, already there.<sup>52</sup>

As David Bosch notes in *Transforming Mission*, the church's understanding of the term mission has evolved over the centuries, from an inter-trinitarian conveyance of authority, to the conversion of the Roman Empire, to the convulsions of Protestantism, and the colonialism of the early-modern period. Yet, despite these changes in emphasis, there remain certain unalterable principles that are deeply rooted in the church's Christology. They include the primacy of the Christ-event in human history, with particular concern for soteriological efficacy, and the expansion of God's Kingdom on Earth. As Bosch notes, it is the Great Commission (Matthew 28.16–20) that gave impetus to the church's mission, yet he challenges his readers to dwell not only on the sacerdotal element of the command to baptize, but instead to think more deeply about the implications of true disciple-making, and to re-imagine what Jesus's instructions to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded,” (v. 20) actually means both within the context of Matthew's Gospel, and our current environment.

This would be in keeping with Matthew's own example. Bosch rightly points out that:

(for) Matthew ... being a disciple means living out the teachings of Jesus, which the evangelist has recorded in great detail in his gospel. It is unthinkable to divorce the Christian life of love and justice from being a disciple. Discipleship involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice

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51 Tom Nelson, “Tom Nelson: Pastoral Malpractice,” *Christianity Today* (December 22, 2014), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2014/december-online-only/tom-nelson-pastoral-malpractice.html>. Accessed 16 October 2020.

52 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 659.

and love, and to obedience to the entire will of God ... Mission involves, from the beginning and as a matter of course, making new believers sensitive to the needs of others, opening their eyes and hearts to recognize injustice, suffering, oppression, and the plight of those who have fallen by the wayside.<sup>53</sup>

Is this not precisely what the missional emphasis on faith, work and economics is all about? The goal is not merely to be 'salt and light' within the so-called secular spheres of industry and commerce, as desirable as that may be, but to promote 'full-life discipleship', and to follow the command of God to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with (our) God (Mic. 6:8)," and to bring about human flourishing, especially where injustice, suffering and oppression reign.

This must be true regardless of one's eschatological beliefs about the temporal nature of the created order. Some concerns are eternal, because they transcend time and space and reflect the being, nature and character of God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and concern for the physical as well as the spiritual wellbeing of our neighbors, must always be at the center of our theology of mission. As Bosch himself suggests:

We need an eschatology for mission which is both future-directed and oriented to the here and now. It must be an eschatology that holds in creative and redemptive tension the already and the not yet; the world of sin and rebellion, and the world God loves; the new age that has already begun and the old that has not yet ended (Manson 1953:37of); justice as well as justification; the gospel of liberation and the gospel of salvation.<sup>54</sup>

Lastly, we would do well to remember that God cares deeply about what we do with our lives, which naturally means our work (whether paid or unpaid), our economic activity and our stewardship, because they are a reflection of our devotion to God. As the Apostle Paul admonishes, even those working in the most degrading conditions, "(w)hatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23–24); and to the persecuted church, he says, "(t)herefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

53 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 82–83.

54 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 520.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12.1–2a)

Australian scholar Kara Martin synthesizes these concepts in the title of her recent books, *Workship: How to use Your Work to Worship God* and *Workship 2: How to Flourish at Work*, and in her chapter in this volume, as useful reminders that we do not only worship God in church with our songs and our prayers and our liturgies.<sup>55</sup> We also worship God in the world for which Christ died, with our bodies and our minds, with our time, our talents and our treasures. No Christian should fear the integration of faith, work and economics, for no Christian ever faces them alone. They are invited to be part of a worldwide fellowship of theologians and practitioners, pastors and lay people, who together imbibe the rich and ever-growing body of literature and resources available to them; and most assuredly they should be sure that Jesus himself is with them, “even until the end of the age (Matthew 28.20b).”

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55 Kara Martin, *Workship: How to use Your Work to Worship God* (Singapore: Graceworks, 2017); *Workship 2: How to Flourish at Work* (Singapore: Graceworks, 2018); “Formed to Be on a Mission for God in the Workplace: Doctors and Teachers’ Perspectives,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).



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# More Than Technique: the Professions as Missional Vocations

*Andrew Sloane*

## Abstract

Older notions of the professions as inherently moral callings to a particular vocation have been under pressure from the critique of professional paternalism and privilege and the conversion of professional practice into consumer commodity. This chapter explores the question of whether it is possible to reclaim the notion of profession as a moral practice and a missional vocation in light of the work of Bosch and others on the mission of the whole people of God. Following a brief discussion of the notion of the ‘professions,’ the chapter seeks to identify and respond to criticisms of that concept, then turns to consider how we ought to think theologically and missiologically about the professions, as well as how professions function as inherently moral enterprises. Using medicine as a test case, the author suggests that fundamental to theological and ethical reflection on the notion of ‘profession’ is a recognition of the power inherent in certain social practices, and the moral call that is entailed in that power. Such views challenge the tendency to treat disciplines such as medicine as primarily exercises in technical competence that are ‘consumed’ by customers. The chapter closes with some reflections on the way these moral enterprises are both sustained by particular forms of (missional) Christian community and function as expressions of them in service of vulnerable people. This provides a missiological re-consideration of the place of professions in light of Bosch’s call for the Church’s mission to include and mobilize the whole people of God.

## Keywords

Medicine – mission – moral formation – professions – vocation – virtue

## 1 Introduction

Medicine, teaching, the law, pastoral ministry. These four traditional ‘professions’ have loomed large in many Christians’ imaginations as the paradigms of faithful callings. These enterprises that seem to fit so neatly into our understanding of God’s mission in this world seem also to provide a clear path to faithful engagement in that mission. Missional enterprises indeed. But all is not rosy in this garden of fidelity. Little foxes of doubt and critique are in the vineyard, calling into question both the notion of ‘profession’ and the possibilities of faithful missional involvement in them, and so prompting theological reflection on the professions. Bosch’s call for lay involvement in mission, and the apostolate of laity movement, also contribute to this rethinking of a theology and missiology of professional vocation. In this chapter I will focus on medicine, both for the sake of clarity and because of my (admittedly limited) personal experience as a medical practitioner. This particular focus will then allow for some reflections on the implications for the professions more broadly. I will begin with a brief outline of the notion of ‘profession’ as it relates to medicine, teaching, the law and pastoral ministry, before turning to criticisms that have been levelled against it, and problems with its contemporary usefulness. This requires a defence of a particular understanding of ‘profession’, which will be brought to bear on how ‘profession’ might function as a missional category in light of the pioneering work of David Bosch. I will close by drawing out some implications, both for how the professions might further the missional work of the Church, and how the Church might foster the missional work of those in professions such as medicine, teaching and the law in light of Bosch’s reminder of God’s missional call to the whole people of God.

## 2 The Notion of Profession

‘Profession’ as a category contributes to our theological (and missiological) understanding of the nature and value of particular kinds of work. This is despite the fact that many of the historical factors that led to the identification of medicine, the law and pastoral ministry as *the* professions (and the exclusion of, say, nursing), arise out of problematic matters of privilege and power. Further, I must acknowledge that there has been a long debate about what we mean by a ‘profession,’ and the key sociological identifiers that differentiate them from other kinds of work.<sup>1</sup> While these are important matters, and I will

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1 See Robert W. Habenstein, “Critique of ‘Profession’ as a Sociological Category,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 4(4) (1963): 291–300; G. Kenneth Laing and R. William Perrin, “The iron cage

return to them when we come to matters of critique, I want to leave them aside for the time being. One reason is that I do not believe it possible or desirable to establish precise lines of demarcation between the professions and other valuable occupations.<sup>2</sup> More important, is that careful ethical and theological reflection on the professions indicates that there something that is common to all of them, that typifies 'good practice' in each of the disciplines and shapes the ends for which they exist.

While disciplinary competence is required in the professions, as in all morally meaningful human endeavours, at the heart of each of them is an ineluctable power imbalance that elicits and shapes the kind of practice central to them as professions. A moment's reflection shows the power imbalance; a little further reflection shows it is ineluctable. Each profession in their paradigm instances deals with vulnerable people who do not have the capacity to address the conditions of vulnerability they find themselves in. Consider teaching. Every human society requires knowledge and skill in order to navigate it, knowledge and skill that have to be *acquired*. A complex, post-industrial society such as ours requires sophisticated skills in literacy and numeracy as well as capacity to effectively interact with complex social and technical systems. Children, while generally hard-wired to *learn*, are not hard-wired with what they need to learn. Nor are they in a position to know what it is that they need to know (and when, and how to come to know it). Hence the role of a teacher—to give children the knowledge and skills (including skills of learning) they do not yet know that they need. While there is the occasional autodidact, most people are not able to bootstrap their knowledge. Teachers, then, are entrusted with power and privileges that others do not have in order that they might use them for the benefit of those entrusted into their care. Of course, one aim is that the teacher might render themselves redundant—that those in their charge develop the knowledge and skills they need not only to navigate the world, but to acquire the new knowledge and skills they will require for changing life-circumstances (and a now rapidly changing culture). Nonetheless, there is a non-incidental power imbalance at the heart of teaching, and a call to service associated with it.<sup>3</sup>

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of the profession: a critique on closure in the Australian accounting profession," *Asian Social Science* 7(6) (2011): 35–41; Keith Jackson, "Professions," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, edited by Bryan S. Turner (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 1–5.

2 This applies across the board in relation to 'professional', academic, and other disciplines, for which see Andrew Sloane, *On Being a Christian in the Academy: Nicholas Wolterstorff and the Practice of Christian Scholarship* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), esp. 11–73, 127–28.

3 As I have noted elsewhere, this is also true of medicine, for which see: Andrew Sloane, "Christianity and the Transformation of Medicine," in *Christianity and the Disciplines: The*

So, a profession such as teaching or medicine is a particular social practice that exists to address a condition of human vulnerability that the recipient is unable to address on their own. There is a clear disparity in power between the professional and the one they serve, a disparity that elicits the use of that power in service of the other, with their best interests in mind (and not those of the practitioner). This power is deployed in order either to reverse the vulnerability exposed by their need, or to enable the person to manage it as well as can be expected. There are boundaries around the use of that power, and standards of excellence that need to be met. Integral to a person's entry into a profession is their induction into the practice of their discipline, which entails the attaining and demonstration of the requisite skills, knowledge, and capabilities that will enable them to be a safe and competent practitioner. And an awareness of the moral frameworks that govern good practice. What, might you ask, could possibly be wrong with that? On what grounds could anyone, let alone a Christian, call into question the value and the validity of entering one of these professions?

### 3 The Problems of Profession

First, I will begin by quickly dismissing a misguided *theological* critique of profession—one that pertains, in fact, to all forms of ‘secular’ employment. I am acutely aware of the view that the only work that directly contributes to God's purposes in the world is so-called ‘gospel ministry’. The work of evangelism and discipleship has intrinsic value, given that it aims at presenting everyone mature in Christ. Other occupations have only instrumental value inasmuch as they enable us to provide for ourselves and our dependents, contribute to ‘gospel ministry,’ and provide us with opportunities to model faithful living in the workplace (such as diligence and ethical use of money) and evangelize our colleagues.<sup>4</sup> The professions are no exception. It is, to quote a

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*Transformation of the University*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 85–99; Andrew Sloane, *Vulnerability and Care: Christian Reflections on the Philosophy of Medicine* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). I will outline some of the key elements of this below when I come to a missional understanding of medicine as a profession.

- 4 Views of this kind are still prevalent in sectors of conservative evangelicalism. See, for instance, Paul Grimmond, “Work, value and the gospel,” *The Briefing* (6 January 2014) <http://thebriefing.com.au/2014/01/work-value-and-the-gospel/>. Accessed 29 January 2021. For a more nuanced version that, while valuing pastoral ministry above other vocations, does see them as having contributing to God's purposes, see Con Campbell, “The Work of the Lord, parts 1–3,” Sapientia: Carl F. H. Henry Centre (April 21, April 28 and May 5, 2015), <https://>

contemporary of mine, ‘better to be a third-rate minister of the gospel than a first-rate doctor.’ There is not scope in this piece to show just how wrong-headed (and frankly, dangerous) such a view is—perhaps it suffices to note how Bosch’s work thirty years ago undercuts such claims. His missiology clearly includes evangelism as essential to mission—but it is a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition of the Church’s faithful response to God’s missional invitation, a call that encompasses the whole people of God.<sup>5</sup> Suffice to say, anything other than the narrowest construal of the *shalom*-making mission of God in the world values the contribution everyday life and work—including the other three professions—can make to God’s Kingdom. Such valuing of ‘non-ordained’ ministry was a key element in the call to renewal of the Church arising out of the ‘ministry of the laity’ movement: it recognises that ‘lay’ people are representatives of the Church’s mission in the world, contributing to God’s own mission in their quotidian activities.<sup>6</sup> This has also become a clear theme in the theology of work literature: what may have been seen as radical in Bosch’s pioneering work has become almost commonplace.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, rather than arguing for the proposition that God’s mission is for the whole people of God, the theology of work movement gets on with the business of articulating what that whole people of God theology of mission looks like in the everyday practices of (working) Christians, and how that can be seen as making a key contribution to God’s *shalom*-making purposes in the world. That is the approach I will adopt in this chapter.

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- 5 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 9–11, 386–87, 408–10, 78–85. For a reasonably comprehensive biblical theology of integral mission see, Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s grand narrative* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006). It is also evident in the missiology of M.M. Thomas, Rajaiah D. Paul, and Hendrik Kraemer, as well as Virginia Fabella, for which see: *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 246–49, 256–58.
- 6 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene. “Laity.” In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva/ Grand Rapids: WCC/ Eerdmans, 2002) 658–64., esp., 663.
- 7 See, for instance: Timothy J. Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Riverhead, 2012), 218–44; Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007); Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). It is worth noting that Bosch stated that: ‘If ... the entire life of the church is missionary, it follows that we desperately need a theology of the laity—something of which only the first rudiments are now emerging’ (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 484). The theology of work movement is clearly addressing that lack.

Let me move on to other criticisms. The first charge is broadly ethical: the professions are inherently exclusionary and abusive. If there is power at work in the professions, it is not power in service of the vulnerable but in service of the profession and its vested interests and the practitioners and practices it endorses. At their best they foster the kind of paternalism that has no place in contemporary society. At their worst, rather than providing appropriate scrutiny and fostering requisite skills, professional bodies shield their members from appropriate scrutiny and cover up incompetent and unprofessional conduct.<sup>8</sup> For example, instead of being inducted into the profession as valued colleagues, junior doctors are neglected, bullied, victimized and abused by their senior colleagues and collegial bodies.<sup>9</sup> It would be dangerous to dismiss these criticisms. And I have no intention of doing so. Recent experience in Australia alone has shown the toxicity of much professional culture in medicine and the toll it takes, particularly on junior doctors.<sup>10</sup> The statistics on suicide and burnout are sobering, and make it clear that all is not well with the professions. If the notion of professions as inherently moral enterprises is to have any purchase, the professions need to get their own houses in order.

The second criticism is sociological: there is no 'essence' of a profession. There are no precise boundaries that enable us to determine whether a particular enterprise counts as a 'profession' or not, or even where the boundaries of a particular profession might lie. There is no non-question-begging way of definitively identifying what lines of work count as a 'profession' and which do not.<sup>11</sup> 'Profession', then, is stipulative, and functions as a way of establishing the status of one kind of work or industry over against others, and establishing

8 See Jackson, "Professions," 4–5; Hamidreza Namazi, "Ten Criticisms on Professionalism," *International Journal of Body, Mind & Culture* 5(2) (2018): 67–69; Nick Butler, Shiona Chillias, and Sara Louise Muhr, "Professions at the margins," *Ephemera* 12(3) (2012): 259–72. There are striking parallels with Virginia Fabella M. M.'s critique of hierarchical power in the Church, for which see her "Mission of Women in the Church in Asia: Role and Position," in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, edited by John S. Pobere and Barbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 82–84, 89; in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 256–57.

9 Some of the worst instances of this are evident in medicine (especially surgery), prompting attempts to eliminate bullying and harassment through inquiry and codes of practice (see <https://www.surgeons.org/en/about-racs/about-respect/what-we-have-done/our-action-plan>)—with limited success.

10 See the reports on the ABC news website: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/health/2020-02-10/bullying-harassment-medicine-doctors/11949748>; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-02/bullying-in-medicine-policies-do-not-change-culture/11980240>

11 Habenstein, "Profession"; Laing and Perrin, "Profession"; Jackson, "Professions"; Butler, Chillias, and Muhr, "Professions."

structures of exclusion and control over those who would profess to work in it. This is reflected in language. Whether they were ever confined to references to the classical professions, the words ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ have become almost void for vagueness. In general parlance a ‘profession’ has come to mean any line of remunerated employment that is granted significant social status; and ‘professional’ is little more than a way of distinguishing good from shoddy work (‘that’s a professional paint job’), or paid vs amateur endeavours (professional vs amateur sport, for instance). Using the words ‘medical profession’ does not mark out that enterprise from the herd, except by way of any lingering gravitas attached to the word ‘medical’.<sup>12</sup>

While I do not believe there is any *causal* connection, there has been an associated shift in both patients’ and doctors’ understandings of their role. Legitimate criticisms of medical paternalism and egregious unethical research practices gave rise to a new paradigm in medical and bioethics which prizes patient autonomy, perhaps above all other considerations.<sup>13</sup> Corresponding to this, and in part as the result of significant advances in medical knowledge and technology, the doctor has come to be seen primarily as a technical expert. The doctor becomes a biomedical technician whose primary aims are the most efficient production of predetermined ‘health’ outcomes. *Technique* rules and patients, rather than being subjects of care, are subjected to ever-expanding medical gaze, and become objects of interventions, or purchasers of autonomously chosen healthcare services, commodities.<sup>14</sup> Any notion that doctors are moral agents engaged in an enterprise whose internal morality might constrain their actions is rejected as an illegitimate imposition of morality on a

12 Donald B. Kraybill, “The Professionalization of Everything and Everyone,” in *Perils of Professionalism: Essays on Christian Faith and Professionalism*, edited by Donald B. Kraybill and Phyllis Pellman Good (Scottsdale: Herald, 1982) reflects on these shifts, as well as the tensions inherent in professional identity as a Christian.

13 See, for instance, Alastair V. Campbell et al., *Medical Ethics*, 2nd edn. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), 2–16; James Rusthoven, *Covenantal Biomedical Ethics for Contemporary Medicine: An Alternative to Principles-Based Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 13–47. The classic treatment is the principlist approach of Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 7th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

14 I have discussed this elsewhere, for which see Sloane, “Christianity and the Transformation of Medicine”; Sloane, *Vulnerability and Care*, 19–27, 83–87. For a particularly trenchant critique of the medical gaze, see Jeffrey P. Bishop, *The Anticipatory Corpse: Medicine, Power and the Care of the Dying* (Notre Dame, IN: UNDP, 2011). For the problems of commodification in medicine, see Edmund D. Pellegrino, “The Commodification of Medical and Health Care: The Moral Consequences of a Paradigm Shift from a Professional to a Market Ethic,” in *The Philosophy of Medicine Reborn: A Pellegrino Reader*, ed. H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. and Fabrice Jotterand (Notre Dame: UNDP, 2008).



legally and socially sanctioned transaction. This has serious ramifications for conscientious objection by practitioners to providing particular 'services'.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4 A Defence (of Sorts) of 'Profession'

How should we respond? To continue my focus on medicine, some have tried to resuscitate the so-called Christian Hippocratic tradition, appealing to fading codes of medical practice, and clinging to problematic notions of 'profession'.<sup>16</sup> While I sympathize with those efforts, and recognize the way they attempt to show that 'profession' still has value as a concept, I believe they are misguided on both historical and conceptual grounds.<sup>17</sup> Rather, I would suggest we reflect theologically on a practice such as medicine so as to determine its nature and goals. This entails a theological account of what a properly ordered society might look like, and what ends it ought to seek to foster, as well as identifying those goods that medicine, as it has evolved in late modern societies, might contribute to it—and thus what it means for it to be a profession.

The primary context for a theological understanding of medicine, or any other human profession or endeavour, is a Christian vision of humans in community.<sup>18</sup> We are creatures of a particular kind, created by God to live in relationship with God, each other (in properly functioning communities), and so enact our common creaturely calling in the world, and the particular ways we might express it. Sin has corrupted us and the communities that form and are formed by us, and frustrated God's intentions for God's good creation. Nonetheless, as those created in the image of God and invited into renewed

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15 Marta Spranzi, "Integrity: Professional," in *Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics*, ed. Henk ten Have (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014) outlines the role that moral integrity has played in the history of the medical profession. Julian Savulescu is one of the most vocal opponents of conscientious objection in medical practice. See, for instance, Julian Savulescu, "Conscientious objection in medicine," *BMJ* 332 (2006): 294–97. The state of the law on this matter is mixed. For instance, the recent legislation on medically assisted dying in Victoria has robust provisions for conscientious objection (<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying/health-practitioner-information>), while that on abortion seriously limits it and mandates referral to another practitioner (<https://www.lawreform.vic.gov.au/all-projects/abortion>). For an important discussion of conscience and medical morality, see Pellegrino, "The Physician's Conscience."

16 Nigel M de S Cameron, *The New Medicine: The Revolution in Technology and Ethics* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991).

17 See Sloane, *Vulnerability and Care*, 79–83.

18 I discuss this at length in Sloane, *Vulnerability and Care*, esp., 113–58.

relationship with God, each other and the world, we are still called by God into community and into the world as agents of God's purposes. And in Jesus, and through his work and the work of God's Spirit, we are enabled to take up that renewed creaturely calling, and to be agents of the God who is at work fixing this broken world that is so beloved by the one who made it. All human enterprises need to be understood through this lens, and appraised and reformed in light of it.<sup>19</sup> This is, I suppose, a broadly *missional* understanding of life and community, including the civic institutions and social practices that help constitute particular human communities. This broadly missional understanding of everyday life and 'ordinary' work is evident in the notion of the 'apostolate of the laity' in *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*,<sup>20</sup> and Bosch's challenge to ecclesial-oriented theologies of ministry.<sup>21</sup> Such a missional perspective helps (re)shape our understanding of a profession such as medicine and, in so doing, helps us see how 'profession' might function as a missional category.<sup>22</sup>

But before I turn to that, I need to say something about medicine as a social practice. In MacIntyre's much quoted definition, a social practice is:

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions to the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.<sup>23</sup>

The notion of 'internal good' is important, as it relates to the nature and goals of medicine, more on which shortly. People are inducted into social practices,

19 John G. Stackhouse, *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

20 Excerpts from "Lumen Gentium" (1964), Art. 12, 33 in VC2, 363, 390–91; and excerpts from "Apostolicam Actuositatem" (1965), Art. 2, 6, 7, in VC2, 768, 773–75, in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 250, 251–54.

21 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 481–85. See also his framing of mission in light of the key moments of the gospel on pp. 526–30.

22 For how this relates to medicine and contemporary world mission, see Andrew Sloane, "Rethinking Medicine And Missions," *Lausanne Global Analysis* 6(2) (March 2017). <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-03/rethinking-medicine-and-missions>. Accessed 29 January 2021.

23 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edn. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

in so doing acquiring knowledge and skill and *virtue*. Turning again to MacIntyre, a virtue is: “an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.”<sup>24</sup> These virtues include practice-specific virtues (competences, if you will, such as good clinical observation, or gentle hands), and moral virtues (such as honesty, humility, and servant-heartedness), and are integral to a practice maintaining its integrity.<sup>25</sup> I would suggest that, not only are such virtues inherent in good medical practice,<sup>26</sup> but that their loss threatens the nature and value of medicine (and similarly of the other professions).<sup>27</sup> That, in part, is because a profession like medicine is an inherently moral enterprise—a paradigmatic feature of any practice that counts as a ‘profession’ in anything like the classical sense. To see this, we need only to think of the power inherent in medical practice, and the power differential evident in the doctor-patient relationship. A person comes to a doctor in order to have a particular need met that the doctor has the knowledge, skill, and social mandate to meet. Any such power differential makes the relationship a moral one—especially if, as we Christians believe, power is given by God to (or better, *through*) the powerful in order to meet the need of a vulnerable person (Psalm 72; Matt 20:25–28). This is a moral transaction, and requires (and forms) moral agents who are committed to the service of others.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Christians not only have a particular stake in maintaining the intrinsic morality of the professions, doing so is crucial for their ongoing missional value, given that the professional’s power flows from

24 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.

25 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194–97.

26 Pellegrino, “Internal Morality”; Pellegrino, “Humanistic Basis”; Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma, *The Christian Virtues in Medical Practice* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996); Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma, *Helping and Healing: Religious Commitment in Health Care* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1997). See also Kara Martin’s chapter in this volume for a discussion of particular virtues in teaching and medicine and how they can be formed in young professionals: “Formed to Be on a Mission for God in the Workplace: Doctors and Teachers’ Perspectives.” In *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

27 The Jubilee Project is doing important work on the role of virtues in actual and ideal professional practice. See James Arthur et al., *Virtuous Medical Practice* (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham, 2015); Phillip Blond, Elena Antonacopoulou, and Adrian Pabst, *In Professions We Trust: Fostering virtuous practitioners in teaching, law and medicine* (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham, 2015).

28 Pellegrino, “Internal Morality”; Pellegrino, “Humanistic Basis”; Pellegrino and Thomasma, *Christian Virtues in Medical Practice; Helping and Healing*.

cooperative human activity (of which they are also beneficiaries), and requires the development of excellences aimed at benefiting the vulnerable.

So, let us turn our attention to medicine and seek to discern its missional shape.

## 5 Medicine as a Missional Profession

Let me begin by being clear about what I am *not* saying. In using medicine as a particular test case for understanding ‘profession’ and speaking of it as a missional enterprise I am not claiming it has uniquely privileged status, nor that it makes a richer contribution to the world than other occupations (paid or unpaid). I am not arguing for a new clericalism of the ‘professional’. Such hierarchies of ministry and their value have rightly been criticized as missiologically bankrupt, and failing to recognize the common—and equal—calling of women and men, clerical, professional, and lay.<sup>29</sup> Claiming that professions such as medicine have intrinsic moral weight does not mean that other human enterprises do not. Identifying its particular contribution to human flourishing does not devalue the contribution of other lines of work. It is hard to overestimate, for instance, the contribution made to human flourishing by parenting young children and seeking to form them as responsible human beings and agents of God’s kingdom. Parenting and family life make a crucial (missional) contribution to the good ordering of the world. But they are hardly *professions*: professions are social practices in the MacIntyrean sense in a way that parenting is not. So too, even within the relatively narrow domain of what contributes directly to the health of a community, it is hard to overestimate the contribution of civil engineering, or, for that matter, waste management or plumbing. Life in cities, or any complex (post)industrial environment, requires an enormously complex network of trades, infrastructure, social services, economic systems, and so on; and the health benefits of the clean water, efficient sanitation, and reliable food provision that we enjoy are almost incalculable. But while they have missional—and moral—worth, it differs from the kind of morality internal to a practice such as medicine. Rather, I am speaking of the *kind* of contribution medicine makes to God’s missional action in the world

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29 See, in particular, the stringent critiques of Elizabeth Behr-Sigel “The Meaning of the Participation of Women in the Life of the Church,” in *Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1977), 18, 21–22, 26–28; and Fabella, “Mission of Women in the Church”; both in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 254–55, and 256–58.

(and the Church's embrace of it). As Paul reminds us, differentiated functions cannot and must not be equated with differentiated value in God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 12).

So, what kind of contribution can (and does) medicine make? How might it both serve the Church's missional calling and be nurtured by it?<sup>30</sup>

Medicine depends on a good understanding of creation and how it works, even as it responds to conditions that arise from living in a world that is 'not the way it's supposed to be.'<sup>31</sup> Its missional possibilities are founded on scientific knowledge. This may not be an obvious place to start missional reflections, but bear with me. Much of the efficacy of modern medicine, and its continued advancement, is due to a sophisticated and growing understanding of basic sciences (such as cell biology, genetics, biochemistry, physiology, immunology), and its application to contexts of human need. As Nicholas Wolterstorff has shown, research and the resultant growth in knowledge is itself a contribution to *shalom*—and so to God's missional purposes in the world.<sup>32</sup> This is obviously true on reflection for *praxis*-oriented research, as it seeks to understand what might interfere with the flourishing of humans, human communities, and creation order, or actively contribute to it. Inasmuch as it enhances the conditions of God's creatures, and is motivated (knowingly or unknowingly) by a desire to show them due respect (and so honour the God who made them), it furthers the work of the God who loves this good creation and wills its good.

But it is also true for *pure* research, research that simply seeks to understand the world better, in all its puzzling complexity. The work of Watson, Crick, Wilkins and Franklin on the bi-helical structure of DNA was not aimed at particular therapeutic ends, but at understanding the genetic basis of life. While

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30 I should note in passing that the following elements are not unique to medicine, or to other professions, and nor do I think they provide necessary and sufficient criteria we can use to differentiate professions from other forms of work. I am using medicine (and the other 'classical' professions) as paradigms of particular kinds of work and reflecting on how we can understand medicine in light of Bosch's broad understanding of the contribution of the whole people of God to the mission of God.

31 Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

32 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 111–46; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 162–76. I discuss this in some detail in Sloane, *On Being a Christian in the Academy*, 151–60. This should not be taken as a dismissal of the contribution of traditional healing practices, or an endorsement of a reductionist bio-medical model of health or of medicine. It is simply to acknowledge the remarkable contribution that biological science and technologies have made to the current practice of medicine.

its practical benefits are next to impossible to enumerate, just the fact that we understand the world a little better, and the complex interactions that make life as we know it possible, is itself a work of *shalom*. Or at least, it can be. For not all research, practical or theoretical, honours God or lines up with God's purposes in the world. Understanding viruses and their behaviour in order to develop vaccinations and treatment—sure (and how can we not honour that as a work of *shalom* in this era of COVID-19?). But weaponizing that knowledge? Hardly. Now, this contribution is not limited to medical research. All research of all kinds when properly oriented to God and God's purposes in the world (even, dare I say it, theological research on the nature of the professions!) can be understood in missional terms, and ought to be reconfigured along those lines. But let us move on to more practice-oriented considerations.

Medicine allows us to be present to vulnerable, at risk, and excluded people. A well-formed human community stands in solidarity with people in their illness, infirmity, and frailty, rather than abandoning them to their fate. That being-present-with people in their need has been a hallmark of Christian communities from their beginnings, and medical care has been one of the characteristic expressions of that presence.<sup>33</sup> This is a missional presence in at least two ways. First, it demonstrates in concrete forms the love of God that stands at the centre of the gospel. It models one element of the Church's mission on a central element in Jesus' own mission.<sup>34</sup> Second, it exemplifies a properly functioning human community. In this respect medicine can prompt us to recognize that the Church's mission is both to make God and God's love known to the world, and to make known what it is to be truly human, and so what community ought to look like. It also shows vulnerable people—and the world—that they matter enough to us to invest time, resources, and expertise in their care. It is a concrete expression of a commitment to their inherent dignity and value—and one that comes at considerable cost to the community in resources, time, expertise, materiel, and so on.

Medicine allows us to support people in their brokenness and, where possible, be agents of God's restoring work. Human brokenness takes many forms—social, economic, psychological, physical. Only some of that is in the purview of a profession such as medicine: broadly speaking, the disruptions to people's

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33 Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996). For an articulation of this in terms of traditional notions of *diakonia*, see Joshua Hordern, "Diakonia and Healthcare's Contested Social Turn." *Political Theology* 20 (2019): 668–83.

34 Yves Congar, *Chrétien's Déunis*; and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, #7, in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 85–87, 252.

bodily integrity caused by disease, injury, infirmity or disability.<sup>35</sup> It is important here to remember that the goal of medicine is not to heal patients, but to care for people whose vulnerability has been exposed by disruption to their bodily integrity that interferes with their ability to navigate the world and contribute to it. It cannot be reduced to 'technique', the deploying of technical skill to produce predetermined health 'outcomes'. As such, work that 'merely' supports people in their frailty, sometimes 'merely' by being meaningfully present with them, is integral to the work of the medical professional (and helps us see something important about the nature of the professions in general and even of God's mission). Faithful presence is fundamental to our missional calling and finds particular expression in the work of the professions: teachers who work with children with cognitive disabilities who, whatever the limitations of their capacity to learn, are thereby valued as human persons; lawyers who are present with and for guilty persons; pastors who sit silently with those for whom no words will ease their grief.<sup>36</sup> But at times medicine, as with other professions, can use technical expertise to make a difference to the lives of those it serves: this wound can be healed; this child can learn and flourish; this innocent person acquitted. As such, the professions allow us to contribute to what God is doing in the world restoring order and healing brokenness.

More than that, medicine allows us to model Jesus in particular ways, and witness to a coming new creation. In one sense, this is obvious. Healing features prominently in the gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry and, although connected with his proclamation of the end of exile, is central to his own understanding of his mission (such as in the 'Nazareth Manifesto' of Luke 4.14–30). So, too, the 'healing of the nations' and the wiping away of tears are key features of the hope envisioned in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 21.1–4; 22.1–5). Medicine shows something of the character of Jesus and his ministry in its work, even as it anticipates the final restoration of all things. But only in part. For both Jesus' healings and that of the new creation are works of unmediated divine agency, miraculous transformations of this world's order. Medicine is not. It may achieve remarkable things, but it does so by human agency, and by way of an understanding, and appropriate deploying, of this world's order. It anticipates a new creation, and witnesses to it, it does not

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35 This includes psychiatry, given the embodied nature of human cognition and emotion, and the way that psychiatry tends to deal with mental illness and cognitive disability, rather than the problems of adjustment that (rightly) can be dealt with by psychologists, counsellors and social workers. Here, as everywhere, 'boundaries' are fuzzy and permeable.

36 James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).



bring it, even in part. In that regard, of course, medicine is of a piece with all missional endeavour. It all seeks to anticipate in partial, and flawed, and very this-creational human terms, the radical transformation of the new creation, as Bosch clearly recognized.<sup>37</sup> And it does so in such a way as to demonstrate the value of this creation, and the fact that, for all the discontinuity that characterizes the *new* creation, that transformation entails the *renewal* of this creation, not its disposal.

At this point, let me pause for a moment to reflect on a specific missional application of medical vocation in relation to matters of resource allocation and access to medical services. As a citizen of a wealthy country like Australia, it would be easy for me to neglect this important question—one that has bearing not just on the ethics of resource allocation,<sup>38</sup> but on the very possibility of medicine as a missional calling. In countries like mine with (relatively) well-funded and efficient public healthcare systems, people have access to sophisticated treatment for little, if any, cost. Now, there are non-trivial problems of inefficiency, provision of services to remote and regional communities, and our record on indigenous health is lamentable. But no one needs to be driven into penury through having to pay for essential medical care. Cancer treatment, for instance, is publicly funded and free of charge in the public hospital system—something that is the envy of my friends in low-income countries (and in the United States!). Similar observations could be made about other countries with state-funded healthcare systems. How does this have bearing on medicine as a missional calling?

Two sets of reflections come to mind. First, in a context like mine Christian doctors and the churches that support and shape them ought to consider the places where they might work out their calling. Now, *medicos* have an admirable history of costly service in the history of modern cross-cultural missions.<sup>39</sup> But in a globalized world, perhaps we need to think about what *missional* engagement might look like not only abroad but also at home? Remote communities struggle to find—and retain—professionals such as doctors.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps that might be a calling? Not just to provide health care, but to help foster a community that can attract and retain the professional and other services that

37 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 395, 519–22, 529–30.

38 For this, see Andrew Sloane, “Painful Justice: An ethical perspective on the allocation of trauma services in Australia,” *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Surgery* 68(11) (1998): 760–63.

39 See, for instance, Michael Jennings, “‘Healing of Bodies, Salvation of Souls’: Missionary Medicine in Colonial Tanganyika, 1870s–1939,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 38(1) (2008).

40 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-26/doctor-shortage-regional-rural-nsw-towns-plead-for-answers/13178224>. Accessed 26/02/2021.



might enable regional towns to flourish and grow? Or choose to work in (and maybe move to) relatively poorly serviced areas of the major cities, including inner-urban areas, or the outer-urban fringe.

Second, in a context where such public health care is not available, doctors and churches could consider community-based medical programs. Of course, this is a common practice amongst ‘medical missions’.<sup>41</sup> But there is a growing movement in the United States of churches working in and with local communities to establish primary healthcare cooperatives.<sup>42</sup> I would argue that any well-formed community is obliged to ensure its members have their sustenance rights met—a number of which fall within the remit of the professions (education, justice, health care).<sup>43</sup> In our current political and social arrangements, I cannot see cogent reasons why that should not be the State’s responsibility. But if the Church is meant to model what properly functioning community is meant to look like—to be an alternative *polis*—then it ought to step in where governments have failed to step up. And some doctors, at least, should consider that as their missional calling. Similar claims can—and should—be made about the other professions, and there are numerous instances of teachers working in disadvantaged communities, of lawyers working *pro bono* (or at low cost) in legal aid practices, and the like. These are missional callings, and are to be honoured as such.

Finally, what role might the church play in the mission of professionals? How might a missional understanding and practice of the professions be nurtured by our life together (and so help re/form our churches as missional communities)? Others in this volume are addressing this directly, so I will comment only briefly.<sup>44</sup> We tend to start with how to mould people’s minds; I want to learn from Smith, and Kaemingk and Willson, and think more broadly about shaping whole people (and communities), not just brains. In that formation both gathered practices (liturgies, if you will), and everyday actions (embodied

41 Jennings; see also numerous articles in *The Christian Journal of Global Health*; see esp., vol 1(1 and 2) (2014); and vol 7(2) (2020).

42 See recent articles in *Christianity Today*: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/7thcity/faith-healing.html>; <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november/health-care-insurance-reform-medical-system.html>.

43 Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 73–98.

44 See the chapters in this volume by Steve Taylor, “Worship, work and witness: action research in a local church,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024), and Martin, “Formed to Be on a Mission for God in the Workplace.”

social practices) play a role.<sup>45</sup> Inasmuch as they engage us as whole persons, they function to establish habits and to shape our affections and desires (and so how we direct our thinking), and our unconscious expectations, values, frames for understanding and engaging with the world and others. Communal practices can be especially effective, as they both allow us to witness others engaging in them, and demonstrate that *as a community* we value these things. This can have a remarkable effect on professionals as they see their work as not only a valuable contribution to the community as a whole, but an expression of the church's engagement in it, a participation in the mission of God. One crucial element of the engagement of the whole people of God in the mission of God: no more or less important than other forms of work, paid or unpaid. No more or less a contribution to the Church's call to be faithfully present in their communities as they 'share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.'<sup>46</sup>

Let me give a concrete example of such a liturgical practice: offering the tools of our trade to God in thanks, worship, repentance, service; and taking them up again in thanks, worship, forgiveness, service, renewal.<sup>47</sup> A doctor, for instance, might bring that typical, almost clichéd representation of their profession, their stethoscope, to church. As they hold it, they are invited to reflect on their week that has passed, to ask God to show them how God has been present to others in their care for them, in their work with their colleagues, in their management of their practice. And to give thanks, and ask that God might continue to bless those blessed through them. They might be invited to bring their anxieties to God in prayer, as they think about the patient whose illness puzzles them, or the patient (or colleague) they struggle to love, and ask for the wisdom and grace they need. They might be invited to seek God's

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45 James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009); Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B. Willson, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020). Both Smith, and Kaemingk and Willson focus on the gathered worship of believers as the primary formative 'liturgical' practice. I would contend that we need everyday embodied formative practices as well (and I am given to understand that Kaemingk and Willson will focus on those practices in their next book). For some reflections on how Sabbath might function as such a discipline, see Andrew Sloane, "Rest in Peace: Sabbath as gift and critical practice," *Case* (2012), 4–8; Colin Noble, "Exploring Sabbath as a Response to the Liturgy of the Workplace in Light of the Work of James K. A. Smith." In *Transforming Vocation: Connecting Theology, Church, and the Workplace for a Flourishing World*, edited by David Benson, Kara Martin, and Andrew Sloane (Eugene: Wipf & Stock 2021).

46 *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, #2, in *Readings in World Mission*, ed. Thomas, 251.

47 I have based this on Kaemingk and Willson, *Work and Worship*, Chs. 11&12. See their discussion for other helpful examples.

conviction for moments of carelessness or uncaring treatment; for ways they have played on their privilege or ignored someone in need; for patterns of arrogance or timidity that damage relationships or interfere with their ability to help. And then, as an act of complex worship, to bring this object, now invested with the weight of their prayers, and lay it as an offering on the table, or altar, or at the foot of the Cross, as the worship leader leads them in confession, announces God's forgiveness, and reminds them that their worship is acceptable—and honoured—through the work of Christ and the power of the Spirit. And leave it there. At the end of the service, after Scripture readings (and, perhaps, a sermon or the like) that prompt them to understand their work in light of the gospel, the worship leader might pray a prayer of consecration, dedicating these tools, and those who wield them, to the service of Christ in the world—an ordination to the ordinary, so to speak, affirming their properly missional calling.<sup>48</sup>

How might practices like that, as regular, integral features of our rhythms of worship, serve to form, and reform, professionals into (conscious and unconsciously habituated) agents of God's mission? Interestingly, such practices are not only of value for professionals. A nurse could bring their scrubs (or, daringly, a [clean!] bedpan); an accountant, their balance book; a carpenter, their mallet; a plumber, their gloves; a parent of young children, a nappy (again, clean, please!); a soccer coach, a ball. Would that not say—and model—important things about the missional nature of work, and the equal valuing in God's economy of work and life tasks that are valued so differently by the 'world'?

## 6 Caveats and Conclusions

Now, I hope it is clear that I am not saying that the four traditional professions are unique in either their moral value, their process of induction, or their contribution to human flourishing, or to the mission of God. Nursing, for instance, has the intrinsic morality and other features that I have identified as typical of the professions, and so should, I think, count as one. As I said, I am not interested in drawing boundaries, and nor do I think it particularly helpful to

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48 In so doing, the notion of ordination, too, might be liberated for the laity, recognising that all Christians are set aside for God's work in the world and, perhaps, suggesting that they, too, need to be formed and trained for the tasks for which God has set them aside. This comports well with key emphases in the ministry of laity movement, for which see Adler and Katoneene, "Laity," 661–62, 664.

do so. But I do think there is something paradigmatic about professions such as medicine, such that other practices can best be understood as professions (or not) on the basis of how well they fit these paradigm instances and their paradigmatic instantiations. The classical professions are privileged, I suppose, but only in the epistemic sense. They are no more or less important than other professions—or non-professional occupations, such as plumbing. Indeed, a good case can be made that tradespeople such as plumbers or electricians make a greater contribution to the public good than do doctors. So too, a good case can be made that people in service industries, such as childcare or aged care, need to exemplify moral qualities that are intrinsic to those enterprises. But neither counts as a profession—for trades do not have the same intrinsic moral freight that the professions do; and child and aged care do not require a set of technical skills and arcane knowledge such as the professions do. That does not mean that they have no role to play in the mission of God, nor that important work needs to be done to include them in the scope of our missional re-imagining of work and workplaces. But they are different roles, that require different work to be done (and work I am ill equipped to do).<sup>49</sup> A proper understanding of these differentiated roles will enable Bosch's vision of the missional calling of the whole people of God to impact our theology of work, the ways churches shape workers for their roles in God's work in the world, and the ways that engaging theologically with the professions and other kinds of everyday enterprises might enrich the life and mission of the Church.

And so, where does that leave us? The notion of profession, despite its erosion by (often legitimate) criticism, shifts in society and community expectations, and linguistic drift, is worth rehabilitating. It captures something important about particular kinds of work—their inherent morality and associated institutional frameworks and social practices—that is worth attending to. Paying attention to those features of the professions helps us discern something important about them theologically, and locate them in the broader vision of God's missional purposes so eloquently championed by Bosch. God's mission, and that of the Church that bears it, needs the professions. But the professions also need God's mission and the Church that is its product and bearer. Professions have inherent moral form, and professionals need to be

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49 For an initial foray into theology of work for the working class (and a critique of the professional fixation of much of the literature), see Gustavo H. R. Santos, "How Garbage Collectors Can Refresh Our Theology," *Comment* (21 Nov 2019). <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/how-garbage-collectors-can-refresh-our-theology/>. Accessed 29 January 2021. See also the chapter by Siu Fung Wu, "Reading Paul: Faith, work and poverty," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

morally—and theologically—formed. As a moral and *missional* community, the church has a responsibility to its professionals to reconfigure *its* practices so as to shape *their* practice. And that is a work to which we can all contribute.

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# Formed to be on a Mission for God in the Workplace: Doctors and Teachers' Perspectives

*Kara Martin*

## Abstract

David Bosch in *Transforming Mission* identified the need to embrace “mission as ministry of the whole people of God”, describing workplace Christians as “the operational bases from which the *Missio Dei* proceeds.” To ensure that the whole people of God receive discipleship for this outflow of who we are in Christ, we need to clarify what key cognitive, behavioural and affective constructs need to be formed in workplace Christians to enable them be missionally effective. Further, if as Eugene Peterson has said, that “the primary location for spiritual formation is in the workplace,” then how can churches, Christian schools, theological colleges, professional Christian fellowships and university groups complement such formational forces? How can we prepare workers of faith who will be able to influence society and culture? Empirical field research on this issue remains scant. Using the Repertory Grid Technique (RGT) and a narrative approach with Christian doctors and teachers, this chapter reveals stories that point to what is needed to be on mission in the workplace.

## Key Words

Spiritual formation – faith–work connection – workplace Christians – vocational discipleship

## 1 Introduction

David Bosch revolutionized definitions of ‘mission’ and the academic practice of missiology with his 1991 book *Transforming Mission*. In the 20th Anniversary edition of the book, Reppenhagen and Guder have analyzed his legacy, saying Bosch challenged the theological understanding of *missio Dei*, the theology

of mission, ecclesiology, and the role of social justice.<sup>1</sup> However, there is one aspect of Bosch's work which has not borne as much fruit: his paradigm shift of "mission as ministry of the whole people of God."<sup>2</sup> I suspect that Bosch would have been disappointed with how much the church has resisted embracing this concept.

It is similar to the way that the 'priesthood of all believers' championed by Martin Luther does not receive as much prominence as the five *solas* in Protestant churches.<sup>3</sup> The church continues to be reluctant to embrace each person as being empowered to fulfil the mission of God in their everyday sphere of influence; it has been reluctant to embrace the 'ministry of the laity'.<sup>4</sup> (In fact, even the terms 'ministry'—instead of 'work'—and 'laity'—instead of 'the people of God'—may perpetuate hierarchies and divisions).

I write with some 30 years experience of working at grassroots in the faith-work sphere, relating to training, power dynamics and communication. In this paper, I will briefly discuss 'why' the church might be reluctant to embrace the ministry of the laity, suggesting that much of it stems from an inability to conceive 'how' it might be done. Then I will present my research with doctors and teachers on what the essential items for equipping might be, and some ideas for how churches may commence this work.

## 2 Why are Churches Reluctant to Equip the Whole People of God for the Mission of God in the Whole World?

In *Transforming Mission* and particularly in highlighting the paradigm shift of "Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God," David Bosch was chronicling what he saw as a movement with some momentum. He described as "one

1 Martin Reppenhagen and Darrell L. Guder, "The Continuing Transformation of Mission: David J. Bosch's Living Legacy: 1991–2011", in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 539–541.

2 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478–85.

3 Keith R. Loftin and Trey Dimsdale, eds, *Work: Theological Foundations and Practical Implications* (London: SCM, 2018). In the preface to this collection of essays, Mark Greene comments that the five 'solas' of the Protestant Reformation remain part of theological consciousness, however "Omnes sacerdotes (all priests) never became a slogan tripping off the tongue of seminary lecturers and students," vxii.

4 See Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene in their discussion of "Laity" in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: wcc; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 658–664.

of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today,”<sup>5</sup> a belief that the work of the church was no longer being monopolized by ordained men. He records Jürgen Moltmann in 1975 saying “Christian theology ... will no longer be simply a theology for priests and pastors, but also a theology for the laity in their callings in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Bosch saw that movement as being fuelled by the missionary movement, noting “from the very beginning Protestant missions were, to a significant extent, a lay movement,” indeed they were “a truly democratic and anti-authoritarian movement, to some extent also anti-clergy and anti-establishment ... On the ‘mission fields’, even in the case of societies run by men, women were soon the majority. And they did all the things men used to do, including preaching.”<sup>7</sup> Like others, Bosch noticed the impetus provided by the world wars, which caused many to become disillusioned, “that the traditional monolithic models of church office no longer matched realities.”<sup>8</sup>

Following in the footsteps of R. Paul Stevens (who famously called for the “abolition of the laity” in his book of the same name in 1985),<sup>9</sup> Bosch wanted to develop a theology of the laity, believing that society had broken from Enlightenment thinking which separated public and private spheres of life.<sup>10</sup> Bosch did not want to form the laity into ‘mini-pastors’, nor did he want to end clericalism; rather he affirmed the role of those ordained as “*guardian*, to help keep the community faithful to the teaching and practice of apostolic Christianity.”<sup>11</sup>

He wanted to see the ordained and the laity working together in mission: “The clergy are not prior to or independent of or over against the church; rather, with the rest of God’s people, they *are* the church, sent into the world.”<sup>12</sup>

While there are some signs of hope, as captured by Nigel Wright in his chapter “Setting God’s People Free: The Apostolate of the Laity,”<sup>13</sup> for much of the church, this is a vision that still has not been realized. Mark Greene, Executive

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5 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

6 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

7 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 481–2.

8 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 482.

9 R. Paul Stevens, *Abolition of the Laity: Vocation Work and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (London: Send The Light, 2000). This book was republished for many years under the less severe title: *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000).

10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 484.

11 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485. Italics in original.

12 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

13 Nigel Wright, “Setting God’s People Free: The Apostolate of the Laity,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

Director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), writes that a “holistic vision for gospel action in all of life has yet to find widespread, dynamic expression in the global church. It remains the case that the vast majority of lay Christians have no compelling, holistic vision for mission in their overall Monday to Saturday lives, and still less for their daily work.”<sup>14</sup>

This diagnosis is backed up by Paul Williams in his recently published *Exiles on Mission*. Amongst his “eight hard truths about the contemporary church,” Williams draws four hard-hitting conclusions. First, he observes that a great deal of Protestant Christian culture and practice is still perpetuating a sacred–secular dualism. Next he laments that the ministry and mission of the whole people of God continues to be marginalized by many church leaders and theological training programs. Third, he concludes that with few exceptions, the church has lost a clear, gracious, and intelligent public voice and tends to sound either shrill or unsure of itself. Finally, he decries the amount of energy of Christian public engagement that is focused on changing or preventing changes to legislation that would affect Christians. It is a lobbying exercise, not a missional exercise.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to locate research on the blockages to progress in churches, but here I contribute a few observations from 30 years working at grassroots in the faith–work sphere, relating to training, power dynamics and communication.

First, *ministers of religion are trained in theological colleges where there is a fundamental sacred–secular split*. I worked for a while in a theological college which prided itself on its teaching of whole life discipleship. Yet in Chapel services there was frequent mention of the ‘sacrifices’ made by faculty and students to follow a ‘higher calling’; and that leaving ‘secular’ work or callings for ‘ministry’ was a “far better thing”. The stories that were celebrated, the ‘heroes’ of the colleges were the church leaders with thriving congregations, or the missionaries operating in difficult places.

Second, *there are power dynamics at play*. While often lacking in financial influence, and facing dwindling societal relevance, there has been a temptation for churches to shore up ecclesial power, in structures that are self-reinforcing. Within denominations, this may be celebration of a focus on theological and exegetical ‘purity’; a knowledge base and skills exercised only by those who have graduated from certain colleges, and imparted within cliques. Within megachurches there may be a cult of celebrity pastors for whom their church

14 Greene in Loftin and Dimsdale, *Work*, xvi.

15 Paul S. Williams, *Exiles on Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2020), 22.

becomes the centre of much of people's lives: worship, music, friendships, social activities and community service efforts. In both cases, the church becomes the central source of authority in all things 'spiritual', and ordinary life and work is located outside that locus of influence.

Third, *it maintains the status quo*. Every human being has a bias against upsetting the status quo, and the sacred–secular divide is one where church and society are complicit. The church wants to maintain its area of expertise in spiritual matters, prioritizing 'faith' over every other area. The world wants 'spiritual' matters and 'religion' isolated to the private sphere, not impacting on public matters such as the workplace. This is demonstrated by the haranguing of people in positions of authority if they are seen to be 'biased' in executing duties by their religious affiliation.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth, *ministers of religion are fearful of commenting* on work and other matters in the 'public sphere'. In my experience, the greatest issue is a reluctance by the ordained to comment in areas where they have little knowledge or experience.<sup>17</sup> While generally this is wise, it tends to mean that Christians in the pew then think that what they do is either outside the interest of the church (and by extension, God), or irrelevant to the mission of the church, or actively working against the mission of the church (and God). One pastor commented to me that he had come to realize that most of his congregation thought of the church as a castle with its drawbridge up. Inside the castle was good and holy; outside was evil. His congregants felt guilty for participating in evil through their ordinary living and working, and came to church on Sunday to be made holy again.<sup>18</sup>

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16 "The Culture War of Marriage Equality in Australia." This radio program examines the case of Mark Allaby, Price Waterhouse Coopers board member who was forced to resign from the Board of the conservative Christian lobby group Australian Christian Lobby (ACL). He then became an executive at IBM and was pressured to resign to another conservative Christian organisation, the Lachlan Macquarie Institute. In the US Mozilla co-founder Brendan Eich stepped down as CEO over a \$1,000 donation to a failed attempt to overturn gay-marriage laws in California, see <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/04/04/mozilla-ceo-resignation-free-speech/7328759/>.

17 For a critical reflection on these dynamics, see the opening story in Steve Taylor, "Worship, Work and Witness: Action Research in a Local Church," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

18 Paul Bartlett commented on this image which is explained further in his book, *Thank God It's Monday: The Weekend Is Not Enough* (Bloomington: WestBow, 2015).

### 3 What Can Churches Do to Equip the Whole People of God in Mission?

New Zealand author Alistair Mackenzie has led the way for more than 20 years in collecting stories about how churches can equip Christians for the workplace. Some of his resources are available at the Theology of Work website.<sup>19</sup> Organizations such as Made to Flourish<sup>20</sup> and the LICC<sup>21</sup> provide researching, training and networking opportunities for pastors. LICC's Neil Hudson, himself a pastor, has the most recent publication *Scattered and Gathered*.<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Barnes in this volume has an excellent history on the movement of Faith and Work concerns back into the local church, with some accompanying descriptions and suggestions for what this might look like.<sup>23</sup> My own *Workship 2: How to Flourish at Work*<sup>24</sup> includes a section on how churches can respond. There is a focus on equipping activities within church services, including sermons, how you manage the church service, and conducting interviews about people's work during services. Next is an outline of equipping activities within church communities, including visiting workers in their workplaces, training activities focused on equipping workplace Christians, and setting up programs which match vocations or other methods to mentor church members for their workplaces. Finally, there is a discussion of equipping activities beyond the church walls, outlining the providing of chaplaincy services—formal or informal—for workplaces, or ideas for the church to be present in the workplace such as holding clean-ups for local schools, or offering a choir to sing carols at workplace functions at Christmastime.

However, in the conversation about the integration of faith and work, little attention has been paid to what a faithful workplace Christian might look like: what knowledge, skills, and attitudes or values are required for a Christian to effectively navigate the modern workplace? This question of formation is

19 "The Equipping Church | Article | Theology of Work." <https://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/the-equipping-church>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022/.

20 Tom Nelson, "Made to Flourish | A Pastors' Network for the Common Good." <https://www.madetoflourish.org/>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022. Note: Pastor Tom Nelson was the founder.

21 "The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity." <https://www.licc.org.uk/>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022.

22 Neil Hudson, *Scattered and Gathered: Equipping Disciples for the Frontline* (London: IVP UK, 2019).

23 "Fear Not: Faith, Work and Economics For Pastors and Congregations," in *Transforming Work: Theological and Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

24 Kara Martin, *Workship 2: How to Flourish at Work* (Singapore: Graceworks, 2018).

critical to Christian schools, theological colleges, professional Christian fellowships and university groups seeking to prepare workers of faith who will be able to influence society and culture.

For that reason, I have conducted interviews with ten doctors and ten teachers<sup>25</sup> selected by Christian organizations as being well-integrated in their faith and work, to identify priorities of those variables. This study used the Repertory Grid Technique to identify constructs important to enable people to be integral in their living out of faith at work, and as a means of collecting descriptions of how those constructs might be applied in workplace situations.

The Repertory Grid Technique (RGT) was developed by George Kelly to support his Personal Construct Theory (1955), and has proved an effective method for assessing an individual's personal psychological constructs (dimensions of meaning with opposite poles).<sup>26</sup> Although initially confined to research in the psychology field, it is now used more widely. In a 2012 bibliometric review, Saul et al found RGT used widely in fields as diverse as health, computer science, marketing, business administration, engineering and tourism.<sup>27</sup> In the discipline of theology, the use of the Grid has been sparing, apart from research by Anderson & Grice into an integrated model of spirituality.<sup>28</sup>

Initially, an assessment was made of the items already used by various groups in the Faith–Work area, as seen below in Table 12.1.

Cognitive, behavioural and affective items were gathered from these websites of professional Christian organizations (PCOs), parachurch workplace organizations (PWOS), theological educators/seminaries (TESS) and Christian higher education providers (CHEPS). To these were added items that were emerging as significant in popular faith-work literature (FWL). These were then pilot tested to identify how easily understood they were, and their applicability. From this, a table of constructs was presented in the interviews (see Table 12.2).

25 Doctors and teachers were chosen to enable the use of the RGT, which requires responses where people are able to observe others. For some excellent insights into the professions of teaching and particularly medicine, see Andrew Sloane's chapter in this volume: "More Than Technique: The Professions As Missional Vocations" in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

26 JoanMiquel Soldevilla et al., "Characteristics of the Construct Systems of Women Victims of Intimate Partner Violence," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 27(2) (April 2014): 107 (105–119).

27 Luis Angel Saúl, et al., "Bibliometric Review of the Repertory Grid Technique: 1998–2007," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 25(2) (April 2012): 123 (112–131).

28 James A. Anderson and James W. Grice, "Toward an Integrated Model of Spirituality," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 33 (1) (Spring 2014): 3–21.

TABLE 12.1     Assessment of Faith–Work Interventions

Christian organization/group	Focus of teaching for workplace Christians
Professional Christian organizations, for example, CMDFA, Lawyers' Christian Fellowship	Focus on character Ethical issues particular to the vocation Concepts of calling to a particular vocation Evangelism in the workplace Bible study material pertinent to the vocation Issues of stress or work-life balance <sup>a</sup>
Parachurch workplace organizations, for example, City Bible Forum, Kingdom Business, Business as Mission	Workplace evangelism Apologetics Work issues such as dealing with ambition or work idolatry Working with excellence <sup>b</sup>
University Christian groups, for example, IFES, Cru/Power to Change or Navigators	Personal spiritual disciplines (Bible reading and prayer) Evangelism Importance of Christian character <sup>c</sup>

a The Christian Medical & Dental Fellowship Australia website resource links refers to Ethics, Bible Study material pertinent to the vocation, and Luke's Journal, which regularly prints articles on calling (e.g. "Bringing Spirituality into Clinical Practice," 22 (2) (Sep 2017), evangelism (e.g. "Sharing Comfort through Christ," 23(1) (Jan 2018), character (e.g. "Compassionate Christian Healthcare," 23(2) (Jun 2018). "Resources." As another example, the Lawyers Christian Fellowship (headquartered in the United Kingdom) has resources under the categories of Evangelism, Biblical legal principles, Life as a Lawyer-to-be, and vocational specific issues such as Business and Family Law. "Library." <https://lawcf.org/resources/library>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022.

b City Bible Forum covers topics on apologetics (such as other religions, Jesus, Christianity, Science and Faith), and work issues (work-life balance, money and wealth). "Resource Library | City Bible Forum." "Resource Library | City Bible Forum." <https://citybibleforum.org/library>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022. Business as Mission has global reports that cover topics such as Biblical Foundations, Church Planting. The four pillars of equipping are described as personal character, biblical foundations, business excellence and best practice. "Get Started—Business as Mission."

c International Fellowship of Evangelical Students describes its programs as focused on evangelism and leadership development which includes spiritual disciplines and a Christian witness on key issues. "Our Work." Navigators describe their role as: "Our emphasis is on training and supporting students to help them grow their relationship with Jesus and their ability to lead their friends and classmates towards Christ. Each campus group regularly spend time reading and studying the bible, praying, and volunteering in the local community."



TABLE 12.1     Assessment of Faith–Work Interventions (*Cont.*)

Christian organization/group	Focus of teaching for workplace Christians
Local churches	A basic theology of work Importance of good (godly) character Priority of evangelism Importance of balancing church and work <sup>d</sup>
Theological colleges or seminaries, many of which rely on students with no intention of going into paid Christian work (church, parachurch or mission) to help subsidize those who do	An introduction to a theology of work Pastoral care issues for workplace Christians Ethical issues for workplace Christians Examination of different worldviews Theology for everyday life <sup>e</sup>
Christian higher education providers, seeking to help their students integrate their faith into their other studies	Biblical overview with vocational application Examination of different worldviews Ethics for particular vocations <sup>f</sup>

d This list comes from requests for me to preach and my own surveys of churches in Australia. A review of Sermon Central reveals 4,312 sermons (although only the 50th most viewed sermon dealt directly with a work topic: ambition), the majority of which focus on a basic theology of work (“Faith at work”), character (“Integrity”), being a witness for the Lord (“God Working Attitude”), and focusing on God’s work not ours (“Work Worth Doing”). “Sermons about Work—SermonCentral.Com.”

e My focus is on Australian theological colleges, which are the same as seminaries in the USA. The Australian College of Theology is a consortium of 16 colleges around Australia and has five distinct units dealing with faith and work: A Biblical Theology of Work, Introduction to Workplace Ministry, Mentoring & Pastoral Care of Workers, Putting Faith to Work, Finding your Vocation (aka Principles of Vocational Stewardship). Workplace ethical issues may be considered as a subset of units on ethics. There are five units on worldview and apologetics. One unit on theology for everyday life. “Our Units—Australian College of Theology.” <https://www.actheology.edu.au/our-units/>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022.

f One college in Australia, Excelsia, teaches worldview, ethics, biblical studies and vocation. “Integrative Studies | Christian College | Excelsia College.” <https://excelsia.edu.au/study/integrative-studies/>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022. Alphacrucis College includes units on Christian Worldview and Christian Ethics as core. Sample: Bachelor of Business. “Bachelor of Business.” <https://www.ac.edu.au/awards/bachelor-business/>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022. Christian Heritage College has three units covering Christian worldview including an explanation of Christian doctrine, aspects of a Christian worldview using the unifying theme of the kingdom of God, and comparison with other religions and worldviews. “CHC | Bachelor of Business.” <https://www.chc.edu.au/courses/business/bachelor-of-business/>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022.

TABLE 12.2 Cognitive, Behavioural and Affective Constructs, and their Sources

Cognitive knowledge (of ...)	Behavioural skills (ability to ...)	Affective values (commitment to ...)
The sacred/secular dichotomy (PWO: LICC)	Build authentic relationships (PWO: Schluter)	Intimacy with God as the basis for relationship with others and the world (PWO: Schluter)
The Biblical narrative (FWL: Goheen)	Demonstrate excellent competency for the job (PWO)	Working in all its variety and aspects (PWO: Kingdom Business)
A basic theology of work (FWL: Keller)	Understand systems so that one can engage with them for the common good (FWL: Keller et al)	Faithful working: (FWL: Grills)
A history of work (FWL: Miller)	Engage with the popular and work culture (TES/PWO: CPX, LICC)	Godly (good) character (PWO: Stevens & Ung)
Worldviews and how to engage with them (TES/CHEP)	Understand and respond to suffering (FWL)	Serving people and the organization (PWO: CBF)
Spiritual disciplines that deepen intimacy with God (FWL: Daniels)	Imagine and innovate (PWO: Seed)	The church gathered as support for the church scattered (PWO: LICC, Hudson)
Ethical framework for decision-making (TES/CHEP)	Counter suspicion and hostility with hospitality (FWL: Workshop 2)	Continuous learning and personal spiritual formation (FWL: Daniels)
A basic understanding of people, groups and organizations (CHEP)	Pray deeply (FWL: Daniels)	Human flourishing (PWO: Seed)
	Exegete the Bible with application in work context (TES: Ridley Marketplace Institute)	Community flourishing (PWO: Seed)
	Influence others through servant leadership (FWL: Workshop 2, Sendjaya)	Work as a means of worship (FWL: Workshop, Right Now)
	Theologically reflect on current issues and situations (TES: Malyon)	Humility as a corrective to the drivenness of modern working (FWL: Dickson, PWO: Life at Work)
	Connect biblical material with work (CHEP: Excelsia)	Seeking justice for others (CHEP: FWE at Fuller)
	Synthesize a biblical world view with work (PCO: CMDFA)	A felt call to a place of working (FWL: Guinness)
	Transform working, working relationships, the workplace or work recipients through gospel renewal (PCO: CMDFA)	

TABLE 12.3 Results of Repertory Grid Interviews

Doctors (n=10)		Teachers (n=10)		Combined (n=20)	
Knowledge					
1	Spiritual disciplines (16)	1	Spiritual disciplines (13)	1	Spiritual disciplines (29)
2	Biblical narrative (8)	2	Biblical narrative (9) Worldviews (9)	2	Biblical narrative (17)
3	Theology of work (6)			3	Worldviews (13) Theology of work (13)
Skills					
1	Servant leadership (16)	1	Servant leadership (12) Build authentic relationships (12)	1	Servant leadership (28)
2	Transform work (8)			2	Build authentic relationships (13)
3	Understand suffering (4) Theologically reflect (4)	3	Theologically reflect (5)	3	Transform work (11)
Values					
1	Intimacy with God (15)	1	Godly character (10)	1	Intimacy with God (24)
2	Godly character (12)	2	Intimacy with God (9)	2	Godly character (22)
3	Work as worship (5)	3	Work as worship (7)	3	Work as worship (12)

4 Results of the Interviews

Table 12.3 shows the first-preference selections in each area: knowledge, skills and values.

5 Discussion

A clear top result in the knowledge section for both vocational groups was *spiritual disciplines that deepen intimacy with God*. As a doctor explained: “disciplines

are essential to a real relationship with Christ. All of us should be continuing to deepen in our relationship, and having intentional practices in place to promote that is critical.” A teacher said: “our ongoing relationship with God enables him to guide us in our application; such that our growing relationship will influence our actions.”

Clearly in second place was *the biblical narrative*. One doctor said:

It is foundational to all of life, living, being and dying. It is the nucleus. It is the inner part of the onion around which everything is layered. It is the rock on which everything else is built, otherwise everything is shaky sand. In the context of curriculum design, no matter what you design, as long as you have a core, you can fling the curriculum a long way out; it needs to be tethered to the central foundation.

A teacher described its importance: “you need to understand the big story [in the Bible], and the place of story, and the place of the discipline [you teach] in that story. For example, Science is about understanding the world God has made, and worshipping him. We can use this world to benefit others. Science has purpose, it’s living out our calling as a human.”

Perhaps the surprising top result in the *skills* department was *influence others through servant leadership*. A doctor explained:

This is where you can really make a difference as a leader in the world. There are still many leaders who call the shots, and lead in a very autocratic manner; they don’t bring their teams along with them, and are still very patriarchal in their leadership models. You can really show difference, what we are doing is quite a different model of leadership; and servant leadership is counter-cultural in an Australian hospital context.

A young teacher said, “it shows that you value others’ success and wellbeing more than your own. It is reflecting who Christ is and what he has done for us.”

Second and third were very close. Teachers clearly loved *building authentic relationships*, as one simply said, “teaching is all about that.” As another affirmed:

In the teaching profession, everything you do is relational: colleagues, students, parents ... this is the binding skill in education. If you don’t have authentic relationship with children, they won’t learn. They don’t learn from people they don’t trust.

Meanwhile doctors were keen to *transform working, working relationships, the workplace or work recipients through gospel renewal*. One doctor described it as going “beyond the spiritual, by applying faith to the work.” Another said, “the gospel is at the centre of transforming us and then flows through to everything.”

In the **values** area there were two that were very close. *Intimacy with God as the basis for relationship with others and the world* was slightly preferred by doctors over teachers. As one doctor said, “without this, other things will not follow. This is the key, otherwise faith can be just theoretical.” A teacher described it as something

that has to be there for everything else to fall into place. If you don't have that intimacy, you don't have that desire to serve others, help others, lead others to God. Before I was a Christian I was very self-focused. Intimacy with God means it is about him, and relationship with others.

A close second, slightly preferred by teachers, was *godly (good) character*. One doctor described it as necessary to provide “a good reflection of Jesus.” As a teacher explained: “part of good character is recognising that you want to do your best, and to use your talents for what you are called for. Kids observe character. As Christians we can preach and teach, but if we lack good character they will see us as hypocrites. Faith should be transformative to character.”

Various comparisons were made on a number of dimensions: such as gender, age, the number of years of working, the number of years as a Christian, as well as church denomination affiliation; allowing some contrasts between professions.

The only clear distinctions that could be drawn are briefly discussed below.

### 5.1 *Gender*

*The biblical narrative* came second under knowledge for women, while men had a *basic theology of work* in equal first place with *spiritual disciplines that deepen intimacy with God*. In the skills category, women did not have a clear preference for *influencing others through servant leadership*; almost equally valuing *building authentic relationships* and *transform working, working relationships, the workplace or work recipients through gospel renewal*.<sup>29</sup>

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29 While not the primary purpose of this essay, these observations on gender differences bear investigation to determine whether they are the result of socialisation from church cultures that emphasise certain stereotypes of gender roles. John Bottomley provides some useful comments on this in his chapter on “God's Call to Covenant Faithfulness at

### 5.2 Age

Younger workers and older workers were very clear on their preferences in each section, but middle-aged workers (between 35 and 50) were much broader in their preferences, including *demonstrate excellent competency for the job, theologically reflect on current issues and situations*, and *understand and respond to suffering* in the skills section; and valuing *continuous learning and personal spiritual formation*.

### 5.3 Years Working

As might be expected, years of work and age are strongly correlated, except that knowledge of *worldviews and how to engage with them* is slightly elevated for those working for less than 20 years (that is, in both the 'less than ten years' group and the 'between ten and 20 years' group).

### 5.4 Years as a Christian

The mid-range group (15–30 years as a Christian) have two surprising results. *Knowledge of worldviews and how to engage with them* is number one; as is transform working, working relationships, the workplace or work recipients through gospel renewal in skills. The other groups are clearly focused on knowledge of spiritual disciplines that deepen intimacy with God, and the skill of influencing others through servant leadership.

### 5.5 Church Affiliation

This section was difficult to categorize because of the small numbers; however, there was a neat division between Anglican and other church affiliations. As might have been anticipated, Anglican doctors and teachers preferred knowledge of *the biblical narrative*, the skill of *theologically reflecting on current issues and situations* and valuing *godly (good) character*. Other churches showed clear preference for knowledge of spiritual disciplines that deepen intimacy with God, the skill of influencing others through servant leadership, and valuing intimacy with God as the basis for relationship with others and the world.

## 6 How Do We Respond?

It is my firm belief that the church is the instrument for God building his kingdom on the earth under Jesus (Ephesians 1.22–23, 3.10); and that to do so all

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Work: Transforming Modernity's Binaries". *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

people need to be empowered and equipped in every context. This fulfils David Bosch's vision of mission as ministry of the whole people of God.

These interviews have identified priorities that enable workplace Christians to most effectively work in a way that fully integrates their faith. Those priorities are as follows: First, **Knowledge** of spiritual disciplines leading to intimacy with God, the biblical narrative, worldviews, and of a theology of work. Second, **Skills** of servant leadership, building authentic relationships, and that ability to transform work and workplaces. Third, **Values** including valuing intimacy with God as the basis of relationships with others, good (godly) character, and work as a means of worship.

The common denominator is deep spiritual formation. While this has traditionally been an area in which the church has excelled, since at least the 1960s there has been paring back of formation to a concept of discipleship as purely an individual practice of daily prayer and Bible reading focused on acquiring knowledge of God.

I write this last section in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic, where huge sections of the world have been in lockdown, forced to work from home, and experiencing church at home. During an interview with Sarah Deutscher<sup>30</sup> Pastor of Formation and Training at Red Church in Melbourne, she described this time as a Great Shaking (reminiscent of Hebrews 12.27–28). Firstly, all the idols or distractions have been dulled or removed: sport, shopping, travel, globalization, coffee, social lives, busyness. Also, the church has had to relinquish its own idols: buildings, programs, the Sunday service, church as spectacle, the ability to control and monitor.

In effect, the mission of the church during this time has largely been carried out through the members of churches: in their homes, through their relationships, in their neighbourhoods, with their work colleagues. The danger is that, having returned to meeting physically in our churches we will lose the positives of this 'shaking'.

We need churches willing to invest in spiritual formation that enables workplace Christians to have the resilience and the skills to make a difference in their workplaces. As Deutscher says, "Through formational activities, people are being transformed into who they are meant to be and living that out; and transformed people transform people who transform people and so on."<sup>31</sup>

30 Interview with author, 26th May, 2020.

31 In this comment, Deutscher is influenced by Dallas Willard's view in his essay, "Spiritual Formation: What It Is, and How It Is Done," <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/spiritual-formation-what-it-is-and-how-it-is-done>. Accessed 6 Sep 2022. Willard comments that "Especially, as Fundamentalism fell away and our contemporary (post-ww 11) version of Evangelicalism emerged, we had a period of great success, and ... we came to think that, in the language of some Protestants, 'the Word of God is the only sacrament.'"

Of course, spiritual formation is a work of the Spirit rather than due to our effort. As Galatians 3.3 says, “Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?” It is a pity that it has taken a Pandemic to make us question our processes of discipleship, or to break down the idols of work, or to open churches up to the missional activity of individual church members. However, maybe now we will—individually, and as churches—*cooperate with the Spirit* in this formational activity.

## 7 Conclusion

As part of the interview process, I collected stories of the legacies that doctors and teachers wanted to leave of their work. These might give us a glimpse of what is possible if the church becomes the place where Christians are spiritually formed and equipped for every sphere of influence, whatever their context:

I'd like to leave a trail of goodness and blessing. I would love people to see something unique about me, that I am set apart due to my faith. I try and be a godly man in work and leave a positive impression. I take opportunities to share the Gospel. I'd like to avoid getting caught up in riches, and demonstrate that I am still aware of minority groups.

...

Teaching is about building relationships. You will be long forgotten for what you teach, but long remembered for who you are, and the relationships you form.

...

That my students would see the love I have for Jesus. That they would see Jesus in me, and want it.

...

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And what that meant practically was that the sole means of spiritual growth was being taught and ‘preached at’—that we’re saved and transformed by hearing the truths of the scriptures ... we came to accept the marginalization of discipleship to Jesus.”



That children would know that they are valuable: whatever their gifting and wiring, they have something to contribute; a strong sense of their worth.

• • •

I am just a guardian of all these things which have been entrusted to me. I hope that one day it will be said of me that she was Jesus' humble servant, and He had all of her.

• • •

In some way, I'd like people to have been pointed to Christ more wherever they were on their spiritual journey; and seen the fruit of the Spirit manifested in the way I work; seen me as a source of peace, promoter of unity; or a truth-teller.

• • •

I engage every child, I listen to them, I am open with them, I apologize when I make a mistake, I am real with them, I encourage words and articulation, helping them to see they are on a learning journey toward developing.

We see here that there is a rich understanding of the value of the work itself, an alignment with God's purposes in the world, and a deep desire to be missional in every area of life: being (identity), doing (activity) and becoming (formation).

In this way, the participants are fulfilling a hope of both Bosch and Moltmann that Christians "become men and women who can think independently and act in a Christian way in their own vocations in the world."<sup>32</sup>

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# Expressing Faith in the Secular Workplace: Australian Youth Workers

*David Fagg*

## Abstract

A central theme in the work of David Bosch is the *missio Dei*. In the context of youth ministry, *missio Dei* has been understood as carried out by leaders authorized by Christian churches and organizations. But there exists a large cohort of Christians who work in secular youth work, who find themselves in an intriguing position. They feel a strong sense of calling to youth work, yet their workplaces are now deeply secularized as Christianity's cultural power diminishes. What does it look like in practice to participate in *missio Dei* in such workplaces? Framed by literature on the centrality of the laity for mission, and drawing on interviews with thirty Australian youth workers, this chapter gives empirical insights into this question. It argues that this cohort sees the workplace as a significant though often difficult place for their faith to be expressed, through disclosing faith, representing the wider church, ethical and collegiate practice, prayer, and faith conversations. It concludes with a call for the theology of youth ministry to look beyond Christian contexts, and a brief summary of the benefits of this research for pastors, academics and youth ministry practitioners.

## Keywords

Workplace – youth work – Australia – secular – mission

## 1 Introduction

As the church sheds its cultural influence in western societies, workplaces increasingly do not recognize Christian convictions as relevant for understanding the nature and practice of work. Public manifestations of Christianity

are having a generally negative effect on perceptions of faith in workplaces.<sup>1</sup> Despite being historically rooted in Christianity, the secular youth work workplace is no different. This chapter is an empirical contribution to the growing body of research on the relationship between Christian faith and work. The chapter takes as a case study a cohort of Australian Christians working in secular youth work organizations.<sup>2</sup> The aim is not a thoroughgoing theological exploration of the faith/work nexus. Instead the focus is on the empirical explication of theological themes, principally 'mission as ministry by the whole people of God.'<sup>3</sup> By examining the shape of expression of faith by Christians in youth work workplaces, we can ground the theological literature in empirical investigation. This has two main benefits. First, it enables us to understand how Christians in workplaces think and feel about the faith/work nexus in a particular professional environment, which is essential knowledge for pastors, educators, and employers who wish to support Christian workers. Second, it is useful for youth ministry practitioners or churches who wish to work fruitfully with organizations in the secular youth work space.

This chapter proceeds by first outlining relevant literature on the theology of mission and briefly sketching the contemporary Australian youth work workplace. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with thirty youth workers, this chapter documents key ways that they express their faith: through disclosing their Christian identity; through being representatives of Christianity for their colleagues; ethical and collegiate work; prayer; and through conversations about faith. The chapter concludes with implications for youth ministry practitioners and academics, for those who wish to support Christian professionals, and for further research.

A clarifying note on two terms is needed. First, in Australia, until the late 1970s, 'youth work' could mean youth work done by Christian organizations for explicitly Christian ends, or it could mean clearly secular youth work.

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1 As examples in Australia, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and lobbying surrounding the marriage equality postal vote,

2 These are not chaplains, or in any sense employed or authorized by Christian churches or organisations. They are professional youth workers, employed as such in secular organisations. Attentive readers may ask where this leaves organizations such as Anglicare or UnitingCare, who have links to 'parent' Christian denominations. After all, organizations of this type employ the bulk of youth workers in Australia. I treat these as secular organizations (excepting those linked to the Catholic Church), as they are essentially autonomous from the religious authority that denominations attempt to exert. See Mark Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis," *Sociology of Religion* 54(2) (1993): 147–69; "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces* 72(3) (1994): 749–7.

3 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 473.

Meanings began to change in the late 1970s as the two branches of youth work began to diverge and establish their own bases of theory, practice, and training.<sup>4</sup> Though some people in youth ministry still use the term ‘youth work’ to describe their work, for clarity I distinguish between the two in this chapter: ‘youth workers’ are employed by organizations that are not Christian churches, denominations or agencies, and ‘youth ministry’ takes place in churches, parachurch agencies, or other Christian agencies.<sup>5</sup> Second, ‘expression of faith’ is taken in a wider sense than verbal expression. In this research it refers to any element of the youth worker’s workplace activity that they identified as an outworking of their faith. Thus, while it can refer to, say, conversations with a colleague about faith, it can also refer to silent prayer.

## 2 Christian Youth Workers in Missiological and Workplace Context

### 2.1 *The Missio Dei, Youth Ministry, and Youth Work*

From its earliest Christian origins, youth ministry has pushed the church to engage new frontiers. Hence the contours of God’s mission has been central to theologies and theories of youth ministry.<sup>6</sup> One influential model of mission, posited by Pete Ward in the late 1990s, proposed two contrasting approaches to mission: ‘inside-out,’ in which Christian young people are equipped by youth ministry workers to invite their peers into the life of the youth ministry; and ‘outside-in,’ in which youth ministry leaders move outside the church to engage young people “who are socially and culturally distant from the existing church.”<sup>7</sup> Many other youth ministry authors have dealt with the topic of mission, and with changes in youth culture that offer challenges to the missionary task.<sup>8</sup>

For Christians in secular youth work, there are aspects of this literature that are relevant, such as the need to understand the cultures within which young

4 David Fagg, “‘On a Mission’: Christian Youth Workers in Australia in the 1960s–1970s”, *Journal of Youth and Theology* 20(2): 234–57.

5 Also, see Footnote 1.

6 Peter Ward, *Growing Up Evangelical: Youthwork and the Making of a Subculture* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013).

7 Peter Ward, *God at the Mall: Youth Ministry That Meets Kids Where They’re At* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 18.

8 See Sally Nash and Jo Whitehead, eds, *Christian Youth Work in Theory and Practice: A Handbook* (London: SCM, 2014); Brock Morgan, *Youth Ministry in a Post-Christian World: A Hopeful Wake-Up Call* (San Diego CA: The Youth Cartel LLC, 2013); Jo Pimlott and Nigel Pimlott, *Youthwork After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013).

people are located, and the incarnational nature of much mission to young people. Both of these themes can be readily translated to the secular youth work field. However, most, if not all, of this literature assumes that the youth ministry workers are employed and/or authorized by churches.<sup>9</sup> This points to the need for theologies that bridge the distinction between youth ministry and youth work, and can work to interpret and translate between their respective norms and job role expectations. Though these do not yet exist in comprehensive form,<sup>10</sup> a promising place to start is to see mission, and youth ministry/youth work, not as an enterprise of a specific section of the institutional church but as a task for the entire people of God, including those who work in secular workplaces. This leads us to consider some of the literature on the ministry of the laity.

## 2.2 *Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God*

In the 1950s, M. M. Thomas was Vice-Chairman of the World Student Christian Federation, and youth secretary of the Mar Thoma church in India. Thomas' thinking provides a useful starting point for a theology of mission that undergirds the expression of faith of Christians in secular workplaces. Thomas charged that when we think of the church, we reflexively imagine "the bishops, the clergy and perhaps also the [laity] who are doing full time 'religious' work."<sup>11</sup> Thomas, however, called the church to put the laity at the centre of the church's mission:

[H]erein is a vision of the Church fulfilling its ministry in the world through [laypersons] who consider their lay life as "vocation and ministry," seeking to serve Him in the day-to-day decisions they make in the secular world.<sup>12</sup>

Though Thomas named this vision of the church an "insight of the Reformation," the Catholic Church was also working on one of the most important documents to come out of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1962–1965). *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, or "The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," gave renewed authority to the work of laypeople. Importantly for youth workers,

9 Joanne Griffiths, "Betwixt and between: Professional identity formation of newly graduated Christian youth workers," (PhD dissertation, London: Brunel University).

10 However, see Phil Daughtry, "The Benefits of an Integrated Sacred-Secular Approach to Youth Worker Training," in *Religion and Spirituality*, eds. M. Dowson and S. Devenish (Charlotte, NC: IAP-Information Age Publishing, 2010).

11 M.M. Thomas, "An Irrelevant Profession," *Student World* 43 (1950)

12 Thomas, "An Irrelevant Profession."



one of the inspirations for Catholics involved in youth work is Cardinal Josef Cardijn, who was influential in the discussions leading up to the promulgation of the Decree.<sup>13</sup> Although still allocating a special role to clergy, the Decree thrust the work of the laity forward in a way that was, at the time, refreshing for the Catholic Church:

The laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation ... As citizens they must cooperate with other citizens with their own particular skill and on their own responsibility. Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice of God's kingdom. The temporal order must be renewed in such a way that, without detriment to its own proper laws, it maybe be brought into conformity with the higher principles of the Christian life and adapted to the shifting circumstances of time, place and peoples.<sup>14</sup>

David Bosch took up the substance of the Decree, and declared that mission was 'ministry by the whole people of God,' such that lay people are co-labourers with clergy in the task of mission. Bosch comments on the various forms of 'contingent' ministries that lay people engage in—'contingent' in this context referring to the idea that "[Mission] will not be the same for every age, context, and culture."<sup>15</sup> He also advocates for a shift in power to take place, such that the laity take a leading role in the *missio Dei*:

[A]n unmistakable shift is taking place. Laypersons are no longer just the scouts who, returning from the "outside world" with eyewitness accounts ... report to the "operational basis"; they are the operational basis from which the mission Dei proceeds.<sup>16</sup>

For Christians in secular youth work, the work of Thomas, Bosch and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* provides a rationale to see their work in secular workplaces as legitimately part of *missio Dei*. When applied to the context of young people and the church's mission to them, *missio Dei* is not simply carried out by

13 Stefan Gigacz, "Cardijn at Vatican II: A journey with Joseph Cardijn & the Jocist Network (1959–65)," <http://vatican2journey.josephcardijn.com/>. Accessed 4 December 2020.

14 Vatican II Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, par. 7. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html). Accessed 21 August, 2020.

15 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 473.

16 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 472.

those in youth ministries and other parachurch agencies: it is also carried out by Christians in secular youth work.

This literature, while helpful, makes large and abstract claims about the role of the lay Christian in the mission of God. But what does this role look like in practice? This chapter addresses one aspect of this question—the expression of faith with workplace colleagues in the Australian youth work context. Before we attempt an answer to this question, we need an appreciation of the particular setting in which Christian youth workers must negotiate the practice of the mission of God.

### 2.3 *The Contemporary Australian Youth Work Workplace*

Youth work's history in Australia is rooted in the energetic philanthropic and missionary impulses of the Christian youth work pioneers of the nineteenth century. This Christian history is reflected in the fact that the majority of contemporary youth work employers are or were denominational welfare arms (e.g. Anglicare, Salvation Army). Since the 1970s, however, Australian youth work has gradually conformed to increasing government regulation, leading to marketization, professionalization and secularization.<sup>17</sup> Marketization is the process by which market mechanisms are applied to the social services sector, such as competitive tendering for funding, and quantitative performance measures for engagement with 'vulnerable' cohorts of the youth population. Professionalization has been hotly debated in the youth work sector since the early 1970s, but its advocates have decisively won the argument.<sup>18</sup> Secularization contributes to the hollowing-out of large religious welfare organizations in which youth work takes place.<sup>19</sup> When government funding calls for professional expertise (narrowly conceived), then an organization's religious character becomes less significant, and priorities are gradually changed to meet the needs of the market. Hence, welfare agencies with a strong Christian heritage and an existing link to a denomination will often undergo a process of 'internal secularization,' whereby religious influence is gradually removed:

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17 Fagg, *On a mission*.

18 For a sense of the literature, see Judith Bessant, "Youth Work: The Loch Ness Monster and Professionalism," *Youth Studies Australia* 23(4) (2004): 26–33; Veronica Goodwin, "Youth Worker Perception of the Term 'Professional' - a Victorian Study," *Australian Educational Researcher* 18(2) (1991): 43–63; Howard Sercombe, "Youth Work: The Professionalisation Dilemma," *Youth Studies Australia* 23(4) (2004): 20–25.

19 Wilma Gallet, "'We Don't Do God': Keeping Christian Organisations Christian," *Zadok Perspectives* 136 (2017).

The basic idea is that when agency structures representing substantial denominational resources are run by executives who are increasingly autonomous from a denomination's religious authority structure, such a development is likely to result in organizational changes that are appropriately understood as internal secularization.<sup>20</sup>

These three dynamics of marketization, professionalization and secularization can have a deleterious effect on Christian youth workers. A market approach to funding means that an organization's religious character becomes less relevant, and over time is considered irrelevant to employment policy. In addition, professional youth workers often perceive the work of church-based youth ministry as unprofessional, and largely concerned with spiritual questions as opposed to a young person's holistic wellbeing.<sup>21</sup> This perception colours the way they see Christian colleagues. Lastly, the secular nature of the workplace should encourage a pluralist approach to different religions, but often Christianity is judged more harshly, due to perceived failures in its treatment of young people.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these difficulties, Christians in this sector maintain a strong sense that their witness in the secular youth work workplace is an expression of the *missio Dei*. What does this expression look like in practice?

### 3 Research Project

This chapter focuses on data from a cohort of 30 self-identified Christians who work in a wide range of secular organizations: welfare agencies; local government; state secondary schools; small and large non-government organizations; post-secondary educational institutions; and government departments. They comprise 16 males and 14 females ranging in age from 23 to 62 years old. Their professional experience ranges from one year to thirty-two years. All but five regularly attend a church. Their church tradition was, apart from two Catholics, mainly variations of Protestantism: nine Pentecostal/Charismatic; five Anglican; five Baptist; and four who attended various independent churches.

Participants were recruited through online forums, snowball recruitment, word of mouth, prior connection, and publication of the opportunity through

20 Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures," 165.

21 Howard Sercombe, *Youth Work Ethics* (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2010).

22 See, for example, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>. Accessed 6 December 2020.

youth work agencies and peak bodies. This research used semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked questions regarding their journey into youth work, their church, their personal faith, their workplace, the work they do with young people, the relationship between their faith, their workplace, and their relationships with colleagues. These interviews were then transcribed professionally, and subjected to a thematic analysis using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis tool. All participant names that follow are pseudonyms.

## 4 Findings

The findings that follow focus on the workplace of these youth workers, rather than their direct youth work with young people.<sup>23</sup>

In the workplace context, 'expression of faith' can take both implicit and explicit forms. 'Implicit' expressions involve deliberate actions by the youth workers, which are not perceived as expressions of faith by the nonreligious observer. Examples include silent prayer or being a trustworthy and competent colleague. Explicit expressions are those which make the faith of the youth worker manifest. Examples include disclosing their faith in some manner, or asking permission to pray for a colleague. Both of these 'expressions of faith' together constitute the shape of mission for these youth workers.

Christians in secular youth work contexts see their relationship with colleagues as an important sphere for their expression of faith. Their colleagues are not simply those with who they cooperate to do the 'real work' with young people. Instead, my cohort often identified a strong sense of admiration for their colleagues and a sense of deeply shared vocation. Expressing their faith with their colleagues often felt easier than doing so with young people, because the ethical risks were lessened.

### 4.1 *Disclosing Christian Identity*

Disclosing their Christian faith to colleagues was a significant explicit expression of faith for many interviewees. As argued earlier, the contemporary youth work workplace holds that Christian faith is either irrelevant to its task, or demonstrably harmful. Thus, disclosing Christian faith to colleagues often felt like an act of courage. Heather, a case manager in her early 30s, explains:

I've told them, and that I go to church and I believe in God and I've had a few conversations with colleagues which is good. But it's taken me a

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23 For a fuller exploration of this topic, see David Fagg, "Strangers At Home: Christian Youth Workers in Secular Contexts," (PhD diss., Deakin University, 2022).

while for me to do that because there was so much opposition at the start and I wanted my boundaries ... But that's a personal challenge for me to just stand up a bit more when they bag out Christians.

Most of the interviewees were on the lookout for opportunities to disclose their faith 'naturally' in the course of collegial conversation. Cameron comments:

So there will be some people where it will come up in discussion, like I said the 'What did you do on the weekend?'-type thing: did this, did that, went to church and they go, "Oh, you go to church?" And you can have that conversation. Or I remember with one of my colleagues we were having a bit of a discussion about values and one of the values I mentioned was faith and they said, "Do you have a faith?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm Christian."

Interestingly, sometimes it was the youth worker's colleagues who encouraged the disclosure of Christian identity. Wendy, a youth work educator at a secular university, was encouraged by nonreligious colleagues to be more open about her faith so that religious youth work students would be able to navigate the tensions of faith and youth work:

When I began here at [university name] I was very reluctant. I avoided—in the classroom I avoided any faith conversations because I felt that in a tertiary institution, no place here. And I was challenged by one of my colleagues who said, "you actually have a responsibility to talk about your faith." And his point was "you're going to have students in your class that profess some faith or another and talking to them about the challenges and the potential conflict and how you can be effective in whatever workplace you are, is part of your responsibility as an educator." So that really gave me—not permission, but a sense of freedom I guess.

There were a few instances where disclosing faith led to hostile opposition. However generally the response was positive or neutral. For example, even though Heather found it a challenge to disclose her faith, she reflects that doing so allowed her workmates to view Christianity through the lens of her character, rather than through stereotypes:

It can be positive in that, the way they then view Christianity is different. So actually having someone you know with the work ethic I do, or the drive to kind of real change that I do, I think, and knowing that I'm a

Christian, I think that, kind of, gives them a different view of potentially misconceptions of Christianity.

In deliberately disclosing their faith to colleagues in sometimes antagonistic circumstances, and being 'on the lookout' for these opportunities, these youth workers demonstrate that they see themselves as M.M. Thomas and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* would see them—as key agents in God's mission in their workplace. It also raises the question of the extent to which workplaces are actually hostile to Christian faith: could this be more about public positioning by church institutions? Could relational disclosure of faith be much more acceptable, and even welcomed, than we assume?

#### 4.2 *Inevitable Representatives*

Disclosing faith led to interviewees being treated as representatives of Christianity and/or the church. Though these youth workers were willing to be identified as Christians, many felt conflicted about being associated with the institutional church. Alex says:

I don't know if I'm a representative. Sometimes I'm embarrassed - well a lot of times I'm embarrassed by the church, or what passes as Christianity. That's not to say that I've got the right recipe, that I fall short all the time. But I think, you know, just to be associated with what is accepted as Christianity is a little bit embarrassing to be honest. Yeah, I kind of go, I don't really want to be associated with that.

However, most felt that it was inevitable that their colleagues would see them as representatives of the church, but had nuanced ways in which they understood this. For example, Matt felt that he was less influential than he had once assumed:

I used to think that everyone's going to link my behaviour to the church, or everyone's gonna link my behaviour to God and form their opinions. But I think a lot of the time—probably 99 per cent of the time, people have already formed their opinions of the church, and of God, and even of me. Things have already been established, and those things maybe aren't as relevant as I once thought.

In general, Christians in youth work recognized that regardless of their conflicted feelings about being a representative of the church, their colleagues would see them as such. Consequently, they had a responsibility to be good representatives. Paul comments:

If these things are important and you believe in them and you think that they're central to what you're doing, your work or whatever, [then] how you communicate those is really important. Now I think there's a sense of which you have to take some ownership and responsibility for that, and so the way that you present that is then really important and if you present in a simplistic way then you're going to be characterized in that way. It's got to be mature and nuanced and sophisticated.

While Christian youth workers may seem themselves as agents of the expansive *missio Dei*, their colleagues see them as a representative of the more narrow categories of Christianity, or the church. Thus, theologies which advocate the ministry of the whole people of God must also acknowledge the difficulties that the institutional church creates for lay people through its past actions or contemporary public positioning.

#### 4.3 *Ethical and Collegiate Practice*

A common way that faith is expressed in the workplace is through the character of the Christian, more than through particular strategies or methods. That is, Christian faith shapes them into a particular kind of person with certain values and habits, which are then expressed in their workplace. Gary, a veteran youth worker who is also a CEO of a youth organization, says:

I suppose it's through who you are as a person, personally. Integrity, honesty, you know, the way you relate to people. Obviously I'm not perfect, but I do try and operate in a Christian way. And what do you mean by that? Well those sorts of things, you know. Like be generous of spirit—just all different attributes of being a Christian, I would say. Which includes those things like integrity, honesty, respecting others, trying to operate as Christ would operate, you know?

Concerning their colleagues and the workplace more generally, there was a desire to be a positive presence. Ryan says:

I want to be someone who encourages a thing of positivity and positive engagement, and so that comes down to workplace politics as well. You can [choose] not be involved in some of the gossip or speaking negatively.

More than being a positive presence, there was a deliberate intention to treat colleagues with dignity and respect. For example, Phil, a manager in a large youth service, focussed on his approach to team management:

My ethos I guess, for work—treating people with respect and dignity and being honest. Through being someone that shows respect to everyone on the team, that allows them to have a voice, you know? I don't hide the fact that I'm a Christian—I think everybody knows that I'm a Christian. And some want to know more about that, and some don't want to know anything about that. I'm happy to talk about it if people want to, and if they don't, that's fine as well.

Although Christianity was perceived negatively in many workplaces, Christians in youth work were also recognized as a resource because of their faith. For example, Bec speaks of her caseload being partly determined by her faith:

But I would say that I probably draw on secular skills for the most part, unless I'm working with Christian families which my atheist team leader will often give me the Christians ... She's like "you understand them, you take that."

Practicing youth work ethically and collegiately is an embodiment of the task *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, which calls lay people to "cooperate with other citizens with their own particular skill and on their own responsibility."<sup>24</sup> In fact, the way that Christianity shapes youth workers into competent workers means that these workers are often respected by colleagues for their dedication and professionalism. Thus, though it is an implicit and unseen expression of faith, it provides a solid platform for explicit expressions.

#### 4.4 *Prayer*

Prayer was a pervasive expression of faith in the workplace, though usually unseen and silent. Almost the entirety of the cohort prayed frequently in their workplace, usually for calmness, for wisdom and for colleagues. They clearly felt that prayer enabled them to be more faithful in their role. Wendy points to the connection between prayer and the workplace:

Being held to account—not held on a pedestal but the expectations on you as the representation of Christianity, as unfairly as that is being a mere mortal – [that] has made me prayerful.

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24 Vatican II Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, para. 7.



Though prayer was most often mentioned in relation to being a calming presence, at times Christian youth workers will pray with other Christian colleagues. Sometimes this required negotiation with the organization's bureaucracy. Simon comments:

We have a couple of other Christians who wanted to catch up with me [to pray] ... and I talked to the manager about it and they said that you can do what you want to do as long as you do it in breaks, as long as you do it in your time. So I have prayed with another worker who was really struggling, who I knew was a fellow Christian and who I got consent to sort of act in that way with her.

Prayer in the workplace is a ubiquitous practice. What does that say about the mindset of Christians in youth work? I think it demonstrates a missional state-of-mind in which this cohort is frequently and regularly aware of their status as public witnesses to their colleagues—aware that their colleagues are observing their speech and behaviour as signals of what the Christian life is.

#### 4.5 *Conversations about Faith*

Opportunities for conversations with their colleagues about faith were desired by Christians in youth work, but they varied in their confidence and ability to conduct these conversations. Faith conversations often stemmed from external events that prompted conversation, or from a colleague's curiosity. Christian youth workers tended to see these conversations as important, but not central to their role.

For many, when they started out in their youth work career, they felt timid. Their confidence to speak about faith grew with their experience. Cameron recalls his journey:

I guess for me the sense that there'd always been that semi-clear idea that you don't talk about faith stuff. You know, that kind of idea of when you come to work you put your faith on the shelf. As I've grown more in my role and feel okay with challenging the status quo and asking the question of why is that? That's where I've opened up more about my faith but I can see very much that if you were a bit unsteady in your own faith or you struggled with being able to do apologetic or that type of stuff it would be easy for a person to tear you down, tear down your faith and so [it's] easy for people to just stay quiet.

Most of the youth workers I interviewed looked for opportunities to have conversations about faith and related topics. They found that despite the negative perception of Christianity held by many of their colleagues, they were quite open to other forms of spirituality, and to having discussions about faith. Ryan says:

I think when the conversation's relevant, when there's an option. There are definitely lots of opportunities to do it, and yeah, they will come at random moments, so maybe when somebody's doing something for Christmas and [I said] "Let's put on a nativity in the office." Or it might be the conversation I had last week, where I was talking about why I don't find it frustrating for a young person to come in and be annoying, because there's some reason why that young person is being annoying, and that is driven by my belief. Yeah, definitely a lot of opportunities to talk about it, both from people prompting or asking, and for me just seeing a situation where I feel like there's something of wisdom and of the Kingdom of God that I can share that is beneficial to other people without having to be deeply religious.

Faith conversations often stem from external events which involve Christianity. Wendy recalls an interaction with a colleague after the 2019 Australian Federal election:

And the other day it was my boss ringing me very distressed: "The new prime minister's part of a cult, Wendy, and I'm really upset. He's a member of a cult. He's part of Hillsong, you know that cult." Because she's got this very clear vision of Christian matters and going back to her experience as a youth worker in the sector, of Christian nutters that are trying to proselytize, convert, brainwash vulnerable young people.

However, some felt that the culture of their workplace discouraged faith conversations. Talia, a Victorian youth worker with Pacific Islander young people, said:

I feel like there are times where I do want to maybe speak more about my faith, but I feel like the environment that I work in, I'm limited. Or there's a glass ceiling. I do feel like yeah, that happens a lot of the times ... You know, it's like we have to be open to everything in the youth system's values otherwise it would be seen as being discriminative. And I sometimes

will go into a workplace and I - a lot of the time I don't want any conflict. So I don't start those conversations.

The widespread desire for conversations about faith points to the self-perception of Christians in secular youth work as 'missionaries'—not only professional workers but also engaged in the *missio Dei*. However, there is clearly a need for support for this cohort in fine-tuning the ways in which they have these conversations, particular when they stem from controversial public actions of the institutional church, and when workplace culture is antagonistic.

## 5 Conclusion

Christians in youth work see themselves as engaged in mission, on equal terms with those working in youth ministry. This chapter has provided a grounded example of the ministry of the whole people of God found in Bosch, Thomas and Vatican II. In-depth, qualitative research has shown that these youth workers participate in *missio Dei* in their workplace through disclosure of their Christian faith, through ethical and collegiate practice, through being representatives of the church, through prayer, and through faith conversations.

Those who wish to resource Christians in the workplace will find much in this research to assist them in that task, including the importance of collegiate and ethical work, and the need to help workers in secular contexts navigate the public actions of the institutional church. In addition, youth ministry practitioners can gain insight into the challenges of partnering with secular organizations and may be challenged by the professionalism of their secular colleagues. Lastly, I repeat the need for theologies of youth ministry which can provide a common basis for youth work across both secular and church-based contexts.

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**PART 4**

*Ordained Ministry*







## Introduction to Part 4

Ordained ministry is about those who build the church are building the church in the world. The church is ordained to enable the priesthood of all believers. The ordained ministry remains a theme present in both Adler and Katoneene in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* and Bosch's "Mission as Ministry by the Whole people of God." Bosch in particular provides a sustained examination of clericalism and the impact on mission and ministry. Similar challenges are made in *Readings in World Mission*. Thomas laments the perception of the church as being about bishops and clergy, rather than the work of laity as they participate in the world.

The chapters in this section urge seeing ordained ministry in broader frameworks; such as John Bottomley's understanding of mission that emerged from workplace engagement, Lawrence Ward combining entrepreneurial ideas with church leadership training, Nigel Pegram's developments in the field of hospital chaplaincy, and Garth Eichhorn's reflections on street chaplaincy.

How might God transform the church for the urgent task of transforming work? Bottomley responds to this question through systematic theological reflection on four distinct life experiences. These experiences – of prayer in a suburban home, shared lunch in a Union office, learning from indigenous wisdom and the vulnerability of open-heart surgery – become God's call to a new vocation and identity in the world of work. Bottomley builds his argument through a sustained and methodologically innovative engagement with David Bosch. Following experiential logics of transforming shifts, Bottomley brings his life experiences into conversation with several life experiences which Bosch reveals as transforming his missiology.

Several critiques of Bosch's missiology and methods result. First, the challenge of where to start. For Bottomley transformation needs to be in the world of work, not the world of the church. This challenges notions of sentness in Bosch's development of *missio Dei*, as Bottomley comments below: "God did send me into the world of work with a mission. Rather, the God of the covenant was already there to meet me and embrace me". Bottomley's journey revealed that God had not simply sent him into "the world of work *with* a mission" but the God of covenant was already there to 'meet' and 'embrace' him. Bottomley thus challenges and critiques any definition of mission that is offered at the expense of covenant and especially any concept of mission that fails to address its colonialist heritage.

Second, the methodological probing of transforming experiences challenges notions of theology as systematic. Bosch's understanding of paradigm

shifts is shown to be shaped by notions of a value-free worldview and an objective science perspective. In contrast, Bottomley argues for “faith’s discernment of God’s activity in the world.” Bottomley argues for a theology of transforming shifts located in God’s gifts, of judgement and mercy. Missiologies of work must emerge from experiences of God’s judgement on the captivity of the church. As John wrote in an email to us “Church in the world: world in the church. It is the capacity of the principalities and powers of the world to violate the integrity of the church and render it captive to a ‘Babylonian exile’ that needs to be recognised.” (Bottomley, pers. comm).

Bottomley’s thinking presents significant challenges to mission as ministry of the whole people of God. Adler and Katoneene suggest that “no systematic ecumenical theology on the laity has yet been evolved”.<sup>1</sup> Bottomley provides different starting points and asks fundamental questions about how words like ‘systematic,’ ‘ecumenical,’ ‘theology’ and ‘evolved’ should be understood. What does it mean to develop systematic theologies shaped by God’s actions as revealed in Scripture and experience, rather than paradigms? How might the world be experienced as an ecumenical partner? How can things evolve when God’s love for the world is manifest in judgement? These questions emerge from Bottomley’s vulnerable probing of God’s transforming work in John’s life of mission and ministry.

Lawrence Ward reflects on his co-teaching of Gordon-Conwell’s *Entrepreneurship in Church and Community* course focused on urban development, entrepreneurship coaching and job creation. This case study offers a specific example of curriculum design and delivery birthed out of partnerships for the purposes of business creation and entrepreneurial exploration. Ward notes that it was these partnerships and key relationships that allowed for the creation of the course, its recruitment and ultimate success. The course delivery created new partnerships between marketplace businesspeople and entrepreneurial church congregants resulting in the creation of 40 businesses over a three-year period. Not only does this demonstrate that specialized and focused curriculum on entrepreneurship training can form partnerships between church and community, but job creation and vocation shifting can occur as a result. The creation mandate invites the church to consider job creation, embracing entrepreneurship in church and community to empower God’s people. This occurs as partnerships form between churches, seminaries and businesses. The future

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1 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, “Laity”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn, edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 663 [658–664].

of faith and work needs more of these kinds of fresh thinking, innovative incubators, and partnerships between churches, seminaries and businesses.

Nigel Pegram explores delivery models of hospital chaplaincy. Pegram notes how hospital chaplaincy also includes nonreligious professionals as the people of God mediating God's presence in contexts of need and suffering. Pegram comments that this demonstrates an outworking of what Bosch describes as a transforming of mission from 'clergy only' to involving the whole people of God—a comment that could also be made of Eichhorn's street chaplains.

A second chaplaincy context is described by pioneer street chaplain Garth Eichhorn who discusses the role of non-professional street chaplains in Western Australia taking care and concern into night entertainment precincts. In a volume focused on work it is appropriate to also consider a context of play which is a significant part of Australian lifestyle and a contrast to employment. Eichhorn's teams of street chaplains illustrate how ministry is not performed merely by employed vocational professionals, but how it can cooperate with other agencies (for example the police), and how it demonstrates mission which can engage with people wherever they are, including spheres of entertainment and play.

As with M. M. Thomas, Pegram and Eichhorn want to question the significance of the secular and demonstrate how to cooperate with aspects of *missio Dei* in diverse non-church settings. While not stated, M. M. Thomas perhaps pointed to a theology of chaplaincy, claiming that the Church ought to permeate all spheres all the world including the secular, and that Church is not separate from the world but stands together in sin, and therefore under judgement.<sup>2</sup> This provides a way to understand movements in chaplaincy to be understood as in solidarity with those who are at play or are sick as a ministry of being present. Chaplaincy helps recapture the vision of engaging the secular world and in considering that any new chaplaincy training must include an underlying theology of participation and presence.

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2 M. M. Thomas, "An Irrelevant Profession," *Student World*, 43 (1950), 319–21; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 245.

# **Liberation and Idolatry at Work: God's Judgement and Mercy in Covenant Faithfulness**

*John Bottomley*

## **Abstract**

This chapter offers a personal reflection on parish life as experienced through a journey from entrapment to flourishing. All forms of everyday work may reveal God's faithfulness in judgement and mercy to transform human wholeness. Women's housework revealed God in the author's parish ministry. In urban ministry it was paid work that re-formed his understanding of God, and in retirement's voluntary work the pain of nightmares in intensive care provided the interpretive lens for a reappraisal of work-related ministry. Whatever the form of work, there is no escaping the ideological justifications for work's violence, a violence that reveals the idolatry of capitalist beliefs' assault on God's holistic purpose for human life. As God's judgement on the author's captivity to parish ministry liberated him for a new vocation in people's working life, so work was no longer the ultimate source of his liberation. God's judgement on his privileged working life revealed the evil on which the spirit of violence depends for its limited but deathly claim against human flourishing.

## **Keywords**

Idolatry – work – prayer – worship – justice – colonialism

## **1 Vocation: Judgement and Confession, Mercy and New Life**

This chapter offers a personal reflection on fifty years of ordained ministry, tracing my journey from parish ministry in a denominational mission to a new suburb, to the outworking of my call to work-related ministry in faithfulness to God's covenant. Through this journey I explore my disquiet with my (Methodist/Uniting Church) denomination's preoccupation with 'mission' and the same church's denial of God's judgement calling us to confess our idolatry.

I will compare my experience with a portion of the South African David Bosch's work, to clarify and contrast my theological outlook. Through my experience of God's judgement in my life and work, I testify to God's liberating grace that through God's mercy re-formed me to minister healing, justice, and reconciliation. As the God of Israel liberated the Israelites from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 20.2) to win their fidelity, so God's covenant faithfulness continues today to deconstruct the idols humans create to modern capitalism. The sin of idolatry is when humans forget they have made the idols to which they have dedicated their lives to serve blindly. God's intent is to liberate us from idolatrous work's captivity (Ex. 5.6–9), a liberation which begins with God's attentiveness to the human pain of our captivity.

It was a pastoral visit I did not want to make. The previous Sunday a group of church members had walked out of the morning service in protest. I had been the minister to my very first congregation for about 18 months. I arrived at this outer-suburban church directly from my days as a student at an inner-city urban mission. Here in outer suburbia, the traditional congregation of orchardists and established residents was on the cusp of major changes because of rapid property development. My church hierarchy thought my sociology major made me well-fitted for the challenges of ministry in Australia's fastest growing suburb. But it was not going well. I was exhausted. The tensions between my vision for suburban ministry and the expectations of the established leadership exploded in my face, and I wondered how I could pick up the pieces.

So I decided to visit one of the older members who had not been at worship on the Sunday of the walk-out. She invited me in, but I was quickly aware of her anger. She berated me for causing a split in the church—a sore point as I felt I had failed my calling. I attempted to explain my efforts to build bridges and hold the tension creatively, but rather strangely for my stoic personality, found myself in tears at the kitchen table. Perhaps my pain touched her, and this reserved, working-class mother reached across the table and took my hand.

As she held my hand, she began to pray for me. I had spent three difficult years at Theological College, and no one had ever prayed for me in my struggles. It was a moment of grace. Later, as I left her home, I felt the burden of my failure to carry out my denomination's church growth mission had been lifted from my shoulders. I knew in my heart I was not alone. I had been forgiven and been restored in God's covenant community. God's grace was the power that made me new. This was the day my vocation in ministry truly began.

David Bosch recounts a similar story of a life-changing encounter that re-oriented his vocation. Born into an Afrikaner home and growing up in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Bosch grew up with a strong disregard for the English as evil oppressors of Afrikaners, and recalled as a young man viewing

blacks “as pagans and, at best, semi-savages”.<sup>1</sup> While attending university, Bosch organized a Sunday service for the black labourers on his parent’s farm.

As I arrived, trembling, at the place of meeting, everybody came forward to shake hands with me! It was one of the most difficult moments in my life. When they saw my hesitation, they assured me that it was quite alright, that, in fact, it was normal for Christians to shake hands with one another! Only then did I discover that many of them were Christians: Methodists, Anglicans, members of the African Independent Churches, and so on.... Looking back now to that day, thirty years ago, I guess I can say that that was the beginning of a turning point in my life. Not that, from then on, I accepted Blacks fully as human beings. Far from it. But something began to stir in me that day, and all I can say is that, by the grace of God, it has been growing ever since.<sup>2</sup>

Bosch also described this incident as a graced moment that began to reorientate his vocation. He returned to university, changed courses to religious studies, and sensed a further calling to be a missionary. At the same time, Bosch began to have doubts about his formation in his church’s apartheid beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps we can see the seeds of Bosch’s passionate engagement with the theology of ‘mission’ in this transformative event.

Yet for me the outworking of the graced moment of the kitchen table took me in a different direction. The Methodist Conference had sent me on a mission to grow this church in a new area of developing suburbia. When the hard work I had devoted to my mission led to one-third of my first congregation splitting away, I believed I was a failure. My identity and spirit were crushed by the failure of my ‘mission’. Yet my identity and my faith were renewed at the very point of my despair by a simple prayer. This act of restoration, forgiveness and renewal was not done by me. It was not the fruit of my ‘mission’ or my work, but a gift of God’s faithful grace made manifest through a woman’s prayer healing my pain.

I learned that in the fullness of God’s grace, such judgement was a necessary counterpoint to God’s mercy. Judgement and mercy were inextricably joined in restoring me to faith and purpose as a member of God’s covenant community.

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1 David Bosch, “Prisoners of History or Prisoners of Hope?” *The Hiltonian* (114) (March 1979): 14–15.

2 Bosch, “Prisoners of History or Prisoners of Hope?”

3 J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch’s Theology of Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 44–45.

Both mercy and judgement have moved together as one in the fullness of God's grace to equip me to participate in an unfolding journey over the next forty years of ministry. By God's judgement I was crushed so my identity no longer found security in the power I inherited because of the prevailing culture and beliefs of modernity that prioritized my masculinity, my mission, my rationality, or (much later) my whiteness. By God's mercy I was renewed for ministry.

My first response to this 'Damascus road' experience was to receive the gift of knowing the paucity of my prayer life compared with the profound impact of a humble kitchen table prayer. There was very little in my theological education that spoke to the importance of prayer for confessing a crushed and broken heart or for nurturing a thankful heart, yet knowing I had been saved from a disaster, renewed in ministry and forgiven for the pain I had caused others, I knew I had much for which to acknowledge and to be thankful. Thanksgiving and praise to God for God's liberative act is the constant touchstone that has brought joyful holistic healing and renewed purpose to my faith and work. My experience seems consistent with the importance Brueggemann gives to our response to God's merciful gift and claim on our lives.

The God of the gospel calls to praise and obedience. This is, we confess the one true God, who is the giver of all life and who intends that all life should gladly be lived back to God. It is God's rightful place to invite and expect such a turn back to God in joy and well-being. The characteristic response to the creator by all creatures is to give praise (that is, exuberant, self-ceding gladness to God), and obedience (that is, active engagement in doing God's will and making the world to be the creation that God intends).<sup>4</sup>

I learned at the kitchen table that through the sharp edge of God's humbling judgement stripping away my defensive self-justifications, God's compassionate mercy brings the possibility of confessing or acknowledging weakness and mistakes; it brings forgiveness and the restoration of relationships with God and neighbour. So while the church gave me a mission, God's covenant faithfulness gave me a restored and renewed relationship that called me into God's covenant community.

Jacques Ellul's *The Meaning of the City* first interpreted my new awareness of God's judgement as necessary for my liberation from idolatry.<sup>5</sup> Ellul's critique

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4 Walter Brueggemann, "Evangelism and Discipleship: The God Who Calls, the God Who Sends," *Word and World* 24 (2) (2004): 122.

5 Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970).

of urban planners held a liberating potency for my early captivity to the enthusiasm of our church planners. Their vision of mission viewed new suburban developments as mission opportunities for church growth, with scant regard to the inherently biblical history of the city's self-aggrandizing growth. Ellul's biblical study of the city from the times of Cain and Nimrod through to Babylon and Jerusalem reveals the city's tendency to destroy human beings. This was what I experienced when my suburban congregation split under the pressure to achieve the denomination's mission goals. Later, Walter Brueggemann's poetic sensibility encouraged me to re-imagine how to live prophetically under God's judgement on the world, with the indelible mark of God's kitchen table grace ensuring that thanksgiving prayer and praise of God were there at its heart.

## 2 Finding God in all Things: the Gift of God's Judgement

I stumbled into paid work after three months without prospects for a suitable church placement and with no other church work in sight. After three months, I was grateful to be offered a job doing research for the Union Shop Committee at a Naval Dockyard with 1,500 blue collar unionists, on the Federal government's 1983 reform program for the yard's ship repair program. I scarcely knew where to begin.

No one knew I was a minister. I was employed as a researcher. I was given a pile of department and union reports to read and a desk in the union rooms where the delegates worked. After a few weeks, some of them began stopping at my desk for a chat. They talked about work issues and problems affecting their members. I listened a lot. I learned a lot about their world, which was foreign to me.

My early formation for ministry was congruent with the view that the church was sent on God's mission by God, and as a minister of the church, I was carrying out God's mission. As Israel had believed God was only known in the land of Israel, the holy city of Jerusalem, and its temple, so I believed God was most present in the church sphere and not necessarily present in the world of paid work. Initially I understood that I was only working in the union office because I needed to earn an income to help support my family. I did not conceive of myself and my research work as part of 'the church.' I did not think I was furthering God's mission. However, God's relationship with me did not follow the straight lines of my thinking and beliefs.

One morning at 'smoko', a Union delegate came to my desk. He took out his morning tea, which consisted of a 'sandwich' made from cheese slices between



squares of a cracker biscuit and asked if I would like one. Not feeling comfortable with this invitation, I began to say 'no'. Suddenly, I found myself saying 'thanks'. Jimmy held his cracker 'sandwich' in front of me, and broke it in two, giving me half. I felt a depth of acceptance and grace in this gift of broken 'bread' I had never experienced in presiding at monthly services with my suburban congregation breaking bread at Holy Communion.

Looking back, I recognize this gift of grace was a further experience of God's judgement on my understanding of God, the church and my identity. The world did not bend to the power of my beliefs or my theological convictions. The broken bread became a catalyst for embracing the brokenness of my belief about what it meant to be a human person and a minister in the modern world. The belief that we are all autonomous human beings and we are each "masters of our fate"<sup>6</sup> was judged to be false. I began to reflect upon the cultural foundations of my world as a male clergy person trained in theology and the social sciences that had encouraged me to live a lie.

David Bosch also had cause to reflect on the loss of beliefs he had grown up with. By the time he had completed undergraduate studies, Bosch had discovered his passion for New Testament studies, and moved to Switzerland to complete doctoral studies on the link between mission and eschatology in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> In an interview, he commented:

By the time I arrived (in Switzerland), I had little doubt about the fact that Apartheid was immoral and unacceptable. If I say I had by that time broken with the paradigm, one must take that with a grain of salt, because I had not replaced it with another paradigm. It was still very haltingly true of myself. In my early days as a student, my viewpoint was inarticulate, but it was a shift out of the laager.<sup>8</sup>

In this interview, Bosch is looking back over thirty years to interpret his break with the apartheid beliefs of his church. He describes the break as a gradual paradigm shift in his understanding of mission. Bosch describes how a paradigm change occurs in two steps. First, he changed his mind about the morality of Apartheid, but its potency as a framework for mission remained until a new

6 J. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 21.

7 J. Kevin Livingston, "The legacy of David Bosch," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 23(1) (January 1, 1999): 26.

8 This biographical data, is taken from a personal interview of Bosch by Kevin Livingston on September 8, 1986. See Livingston, "The legacy of David Bosch," 26.

paradigm could replace the old paradigm in which he was formed as a Christian, the beliefs of the 19th century missionary era.

My understanding of the change in my beliefs about parish ministry differs in three important respects to Bosch's understanding of the change in his beliefs. First, I understand the loss of faith in parish ministry and in my personal autonomy as gifts of God's judgement rather than the result of my thinking about life and ministry. Second, my invitation into the surprising newness of work-related ministry and worker solidarity came to me as gifts of God's mercy rather than a changed awareness, resulting in an immediate change in my sense of vocation. Third, the new possibility of work-related ministry left an indelible transformative mark on my heart with the brokenness of my old beliefs, and the opening up of a space in my heart into which God's word of mercy came to fullness. Something had changed in my being rather than just my thinking.

My understanding of being brought under God's judgement appears to contrast with David Bosch's belief that his change in mission paradigms was an act of his will and thinking to be worked at over time. Bosch's understanding of paradigm shifts embodies the supposed value-free worldview of an objective science perspective. The shifts are determined by which paradigm better interprets the facts as determined by the careful work of an objective, value-free observer rather than faith's discernment of God's activity in the world. As Kim observed, "mission still appears as a work to be achieved by organization and strategy. In this sense, his 'postmodern' paradigm is very much in the mould of the Enlightenment project."<sup>9</sup>

From the moment I was confronted by the broken 'bread', I knew Christ gifted me with understanding that 'parish ministry' was a limited view of ministry, and I was being called to a new vocation and identity in the world of work. Having been met by Christ in my workplace, I could no longer hold onto the belief that my faith in God was confined to the private 'spiritual' world of the parish church, family and home; divided from a public moral order of work and politics operating in the economic realm as if this was the realm of ultimate significance.<sup>10</sup> Yet as my life and calling responded to God's invitation to

9 Compare Robert Schreiter, who finds the post-modern paradigm for mission less convincing than the others: "It looks more like an extension or fulfilment of the Enlightenment paradigm than any new one". Robert J. Schreiter, "Transforming Mission," Review Article, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 15(4) (Oct 1991): 180–81; cited in Kirsteen Kim, "Post-modern mission: A paradigm shift in David Bosch's theology of mission?" *International Review of Mission*, 89(353) (April 2000): 175.

10 See John Boli, "The economic absorption of the sacred" in Robert Wuthnow (ed), *Rethinking Materialism: Perspectives on the Spiritual Dimension of Economic Behaviour* (Grand

enter more fully the public world of paid work, my faith began to be nurtured with a prophetic imagination. The faith that was formed by prayer at a kitchen table, and enriched by the breaking of bread at a union office's morning tea table led me to understand that the worship God required also was to be made manifest in the public sphere: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).

Such worship of God in the public sphere of economic and political justice, liberation from oppression and freedom from captivity to unjust powers is evoked by God's judgement on idolatry: a judgement on the rituals of the parish church that keep God small enough to be quarantined in the private sphere. I saw Jimmy's sharing of 'smoko' to be God's judgement on my formation in the idolatrous dualism of 'spiritual' and 'material'.

When one side of a binary is absolutized, it demonizes the other side and sets us on the path to idolatry. For example, the absolutizing of the material over the spiritual has meant that only traumatic work deaths (e.g., falls, machinery) are counted as material 'facts' in official state government statistics in Australia. But the majority of work deaths are caused by industrial diseases (mesothelioma, heart disease, work-related suicide) and not counted by state compensation jurisdictions because they are treated as 'invisible'. As a consequence, the magnitude of work-related death is minimized, strategies for prevention and justice remain inadequate, and workers' lives are sacrificed to the god of maximized profit.<sup>11</sup>

While capitalism's idolatry is its devotion to the public consumption of material goods, the western church has largely 'flipped' the dualism to idolize personal spirituality in the form of a privatized religious experience. For Leslie Newbigin, this privatization of ministry was too often understood "in terms of guardianship of those already in the fold.... the Church had become the religious department of European society."<sup>12</sup> The workplace 'Eucharist' signalled the beginning of the deconstruction of my belief in my denomination's focus on parish ministry's individual spirituality and privatized religion, and the birth of a new vocation to ministry in the world of work.

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Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 93–115.

11 John Bottomley, *Hard Work Never Killed Anybody: How the Idolisation of Work Sustains this Deadly Lie*. (Northcote: Morning Star, 2015) 95–96. Also, John Bottomley, Brendan Byrne and John Flett, *Justice Tempered: How the Finance Sector's Captivity to Capitalist Ethics Violates Workers' Ethical Integrity and Silences their Claims for Justice*. A report for the Finance Sector Union by the Religion and Social Policy Network (Melbourne: University of Divinity, 2020).

12 Leslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (London: SCM, 1966), 103–104.

Brueggemann describes Israel's Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple as a long, slow process of loss that "violated the deepest confidence and the most treasured assurances of the Jerusalem establishment."<sup>13</sup> Thirty years on from 'smoko' at the Dockyard in 1984, I have witnessed the long, slow loss of parish ministry's failure to engage with lay members in their working lives. My early understanding of ministry focused on the central role of the parish minister carrying out God's mission, which is consistent with the focus of most National Church Life Survey (NCLS) census research. However, a set of 2014 data describes the failure of parish churches to deeply connect with the faith of working lay people.<sup>14</sup> The NCLS survey found that only 23 per cent of survey participants said their paid employment is a calling (vocation). Most (39%) said their paid employment is a job, and a further 28 per cent said their paid employment is a career. Ten per cent were unsure.<sup>15</sup> Over two-thirds of church respondents to the NCLS reportedly believe God is not in all things, and definitely not in the arena of paid work. Consistent with this, only about half (52%) of respondents agreed they felt supported by their local church to be a Christian in their workplace.<sup>16</sup> Giving voice to the separation of faith reflections from their work, one layperson, a doctor, said when asked to describe the character of the God who has called him to his work:

These are very personal (and to some people very private) questions. To be honest, these are questions that I don't ever remember discussing in a Uniting Church context, even in small study groups.

When personal faith is regarded as a private concern, as this doctor testified, then church members are complicit in the Enlightenment project of removing God and faith from public life. Such a conclusion is congruent with Brueggemann's thesis that the American church is living in a "Babylonian captivity." If this judgement is also true for the Australian church's long, slow experience of the dying of its parish church model, it is revelatory for what this means for the church's relationship to its life within Australia. That is, Brueggemann asserts that the captivity of God's people reveals their captivity to the gods of Babylon,

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Out of Babylon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 33.

<sup>14</sup> John Bottomley, *On the Way Together: The Uniting Church's Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Melbourne: Creative Ministries Network, 2014). Note: this research was carried out after NCLS Director, Ruth Powell approached me to discuss my criticism of their census and invited me to consult on framing the survey questions for the sample related to church members in paid employment.

<sup>15</sup> Bottomley, *On the Way Together*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Bottomley, *On the Way Together*, 26.

and the idolatry of God's people is always a problem of their relationship to the gods of empire. The memory of empire is joined in the prophetic tradition of Israel to its opposition to their idolatry of empire.<sup>17</sup> By way of contrast, Bosch understands changes in his mission theology over time being due to a change of paradigm, which has left him subject to criticism his theology of mission paradigms is captive to his formation in colonialism.<sup>18</sup>

My relationship with God could no longer be personal and private because the workplace sacramental experience had integrated me into a new reality, where my personal experience of God and the world around me called me into a larger understanding of God and ministry. With Brueggemann, I understand my loss of faith in parish ministry and in my personal autonomy as gifts of God's judgement, against Bosch's paradigm theology suggesting this loss is the result of my new thinking. Further, the surprising newness of work-related ministry came to me as gifts of God's mercy, resulting in an immediate change in my sense of vocation and commitment to worker solidarity. Also, the new possibility of work-related ministry left an indelible transformative mark on my heart with the brokenness of my old beliefs, and the opening up of a space in my heart into which God's word of mercy could come to fruitfulness with new gifts and graces for the new ministry.

My UCA colleague Professor Howard Wallace gave me an insight into understanding the importance of God's judgement and its relationship to the gift of God's mercy (forgiveness) in the renewal of God's covenant for my ministry at work. In Psalm 51, the psalmist:

is aware that (God's people) depend solely on the freedom of God to grant forgiveness and compassion in spite of the justice of God's sentence. This is not self-pity on the part of the psalmist. They do not dwell on their sin ... but focus on God's capacity to forgive. That is at the heart of this psalmist's confession. It is important to note also that the psalmist is talking about a state of sin in these verses, not just about isolated sinful acts.<sup>19</sup>

But the psalm also makes it clear that confession and forgiveness involve renewal. ... The psalmist seeks a 'clean heart' and a 'right spirit', which, in other

17 Brueggemann, *Out of Babylon*, 19.

18 Thinandavha Derrick Mashau, "A prisoner of his own creative imagination: A decolonial discourse with David Bosch's missional view of a church as an alternative community," *Ecclesial Futures* 1/2 (December 2020): 33–52.

19 Cf. James Mays, *Psalms*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1994), 203.

words, are a mind and a will oriented toward God and open to God's renewing activity.<sup>20</sup> A broken and contrite (lit. 'crushed') heart is what God desires.... In Psalm 51:8b the bones of the psalmist were 'crushed' by God in punishment for sin, but in v. 17 **the heart** will be 'crushed'. In this the psalmist not only seeks to remain close to God but they desire to experience joy and praise once more, and be involved in the service of God teaching others the meaning and nature of confession and forgiveness.

There is in the contemplation of forgiveness a need for a deep understanding of the severity of sin and its effects. This is the broken and contrite ('crushed') heart that God desires. This is what is needed in confession, for it is only this kind of heart that understands the depths of God's mercy in forgiveness (underlining is my emphasis).<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of God's judgement on my idolatrous belief in parish ministry has been an intensely personal experience. My experience had a biblical pattern: to 'crush' my idolatrous belief (Ex. 20.3) and call me back into covenant relationship (Is. 53.5, 10), which in future was to be in the public sphere of paid work. God's covenant grace is seamless: that is, God's judgement and mercy are joined in the purpose of calling people to fidelity to the covenant.

### 3 The Reign of God: a Spirituality of Wholeness

Through a research project I supervised into Aboriginal leadership in the Uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Congress, I faced God's judgment on my white racism.<sup>22</sup> This was facilitated through my relationship with our project worker and Indigenous Australian theologian Garry Worete Deverell, and his understanding of Indigenous spirituality woven together in the Dreaming:

The dreaming is sometimes mistaken for a series of mythological stories describing events from long ago.... In fact, nothing could be further from the truth! For the dreaming is not primarily about the past. It is like the

20 Mays, *Psalms*.

21 Howard Wallace and John Bottomley, *Hope for Justice and Reconciliation: Isaiah's voice in an Australian context*, (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2012), 31–32. Note: I approached Wallace in 2003 while Director of the Urban Ministry Network to ask for guidance in reflecting upon the Network's identity as a prophetic ministry. This book and an earlier article are the fruit of that collaboration.

22 An account of this experience is given in John Bottomley, "Theological Research Work in a World of Precarious Work," *Zadok Perspectives*, 140 (Spring 2018): 21–22.

presence of Yahweh in the burning bush encountered by Moses on Mt. Horeb (Exodus 3): it is everywhere and always present, in the living things all around and like the breath in our own nostrils; it is a past rendered meaningful, a future full of promise, and a present aflame with the life in its fullness. The dreaming is nothing less, in fact, than the passage of the divine Spirit in and through the world as body, materiality, lore, flesh.”<sup>23</sup>

The Dreaming is a current reality within which First Peoples live and have their being, and it is kept alive by ritual story-telling. Australian First Peoples live within the strictures of a colonial/capitalist economy, but their experience of the source of their humanity is not bound by the Dreaming’s recent encounter with Australia’s capitalist economy. Indigenous identity and purpose have their life-source in the Dreaming from long before the colonial powers arrived on the shores of Sydney Cove.

For example, the worldview of western science at times appears irrational in its lack of understanding of an Indigenous worldview:

Australian guidelines for the treatment of adults with acute stress disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder illustrate the way so-called rational analysis disguises deeply embedded colonial attitudes of racism and discounts the lived experience of many with mental illness. Approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the guidelines have been developed by a working party of psychiatrists, psychologists, brain researchers, clinical specialists and allied health services.... There is one reference to spirituality in the 169 page report, in a section on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which offers the following general practice advice: ‘Spiritual experiences are not necessarily hallucinations or delusions’.<sup>24</sup> Here, the rationality of the dominant culture is blind to its own paternalism and the sin and evil of colonial racism when it declares on the basis of its supposedly ‘evidence-based research’ that spiritual experiences for Aboriginal people may not be evidence of mental illness!<sup>25</sup>

23 Garry Deverell, *Gondwana Theology: A Trawloolway Man Reflects on Christian Faith* (Reservoir: Morning Star, 2018), 15.

24 Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, *Australian Guidelines for the Treatment of Adults with Acute Stress Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (Melbourne: ACPMH, 2007), 135.

25 Wallace and Bottomley, *Hope for Justice and Reconciliation*, 178.



Why would this not also be true for Anglo-Australians suffering a mental illness?<sup>26</sup> According to the organization Being Mental Health Consumers, the most impressive and innovative approach of the Report (of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System) lies in "the creation of a new agency led by people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress."<sup>27</sup> The wholeness and unity of spiritual and material spheres that was begrudgingly acknowledged in Indigenous spirituality by western medical science in 2007 has now been affirmed by a Royal Commission based on the overwhelming and compelling testimony of people with lived experience of 'treatment' based on the destructive dualism of the material/spiritual binary.

God's covenantal intimacy embraces marginalized people in a personal and communal relationship. God is present everywhere seeking for justice, healing and reconciliation, including in the anguished struggles of people burdened by the injustice of racism and colonial culture's binaries. I can no longer comfortably use the term 'mission' in the Australian context to describe God's purpose in the world when the term still lingers in the living memory of Indigenous Australians whose forebears lived "in choking, oppressive missions. Children were removed from families with the intention of preparing them for the white world."<sup>28</sup>

The etymology of 'mission' has a problematic history from its first use in the 1590s, with Jesuits sending their agents on a mission to spread their religion in foreign parts. From the 1620s, 'mission' had the added sense of a diplomatic body of persons sent to a foreign land on commercial or political business.<sup>29</sup> Its widespread use by western churches in the nineteenth century was intertwined with and often complicit with colonialist expansion, including in the British colonial invasion of Australia.

This problem was personal for David Bosch, having grown up in the missionary DRC in South Africa. Bosch was profoundly aware "it was more than a coincidence that the beginning of the modern missionary movement (i.e., since the sixteenth century) coincided with the start of Western colonial expansion

26 See John Bottomley, *Spirit of Yearning, Spirit of Service: Encouraging Spiritual Discernment and Spiritual Formation in Mental Health Ministry* (Melbourne: Creative Ministries Network, 2011).

27 Being Mental Health Consumers, Public Statement: Response to Final Report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, 3/3/2021. <https://being.org.au/public-statement-response-to-final-report-of-the-royal-commission-into-victorias-mental-health-system>. Accessed 2 April 2021.

28 Stan Grant, *Australia Day* (Sydney: Harper Collins Australia, 2019), 86.

29 Online etymology dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=mission>. Accessed 19 March 2021.



into the Americas, Asia, and Africa.”<sup>30</sup> Bosch came to the view that in providing a theological justification for Apartheid, the DRC’s theology of mission was heretical,<sup>31</sup> and he voiced that conviction while remaining a member of the DRC for the rest of his life. His courage in confronting the church of his birth with its commitment to the South African government’s ideology of Apartheid led to his ostracism from the DRC. Even so, he maintained his membership and his critique of the DRC until his untimely death. It is no easy matter to be so at odds with one’s church, but with David Bosch, I believe faithfulness to the gospel is paramount.

Yet I suggest his critique of the DRC for heresy did not get to the theological depth of the apartheid problem. The DRC had become a bulwark of the government’s apartheid policies and programs,<sup>32</sup> so its integration into the state propaganda apparatus meant DRC had lost its identity as church. This is the sin that brings the people of God to have turned away from God, and placed their faith in the work of human hands (Ps. 115.3–4). This is not just sinful or wrong belief. It is idolatry, an offense against God’s sovereignty and a breach of God’s covenant. Bosch’s assertion that this problem of idolatry was solved by a twentieth century paradigm change, whereby “the church changes [its role] from being the sender to being the one sent [by God’s act]”<sup>33</sup> is not convincing in the light of the lingering paternalism and colonialism still present in the lives of Indigenous Australians.

How Bosch arrived at his position is possibly the topic for another time. However, given the importance of Bosch’s work for the development of ‘missiology’ as an academic discipline, it may be important to consider briefly the implications of Bosch’s commitment to the concept of ‘mission’ at the expense of ‘covenant’. Perhaps one way of reading DRC history is to suggest Bosch turned away from the critical biblical importance of God’s covenant (including idolatry), giving minimal treatment of the Old Testament in his book (less than five pages),<sup>34</sup> and replacing the theological importance of the covenant with mission as the central (non-biblical) theological concept for the church.

30 David Bosch, “Missiology.” In *Introduction to Theology* edited by I. H. Eybers, et al., 3rd edn. (Pretoria: D. R.C., 1982), 265.

31 Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road*, 57.

32 Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road*, 57.

33 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 379. This ‘change’ is fundamental to Bosch’s apparent desire to break the link between the sending churches of the imperialistic colonial missionary period, and the ‘new’ paradigm he posits for today.

34 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16–20.

By turning towards the concept of mission, it appears Bosch made a priority of rescuing (Christian) mission rather than covenant from the DRC colonialist foundations.

My reading for this chapter suggests the mid-nineteenth century history of the DRC may be significant for understanding Bosch's priority for mission. Perhaps he was concerned about the early Afrikaner identification with Israel as the covenant community, and more sanguine about the establishment of a Dutch Reformed Mission Church as a separate denomination for blacks, following German mission theories of the period encouraging the development of national churches as faithful implementation of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20).<sup>35</sup>

Just as the 'colonial Indigeneity'<sup>36</sup> of Deverell's theology will forever have roots in European imagination, likewise God's covenant people in Australia or South Africa cannot forget our/their relationship exists in contested ground with western imperial culture's hegemony. However, while the spirituality of Indigenous Australians has manifested a determined resistance to the crushing weight of this legacy, the colonizing roots of Australian Christianity have been exposed as complicit in sustaining an economic and political system that reaches into every sphere of modern work to minimize justice and human dignity<sup>37</sup> in order to maintain the privilege of a class who benefit from the capitalist ethic of profit maximization.<sup>38</sup>

Due to its willingness to retreat from the public world of work into the private sphere of personal beliefs, emotions, home and family I fear that the Australian church is fundamentally complicit with this repressive system. Unless Australian churches are open to hearing God's judgement and be renewed as a covenant community infused with a similar holistic wisdom to that of the Dreaming, we may be left to echo the words of the prophet about the enduring tenacity of systematic injustice in our working and national lives: "Then I said, 'How long, O Lord?' And he said: 'Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; until the Lord sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land'" (Is. 6.11–12).

My encounter with God in breaking bread at 'smoko' engaged me in a refreshing awareness of the God who rests and commands our rest from work.

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35 Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road*, 4–10, 24.

36 Deverell, *Gondwana Theology*, 19.

37 Deverell, *Gondwana Theology*, 57–73.

38 Bottomley, Byrne and Flett, *Justice Tempered*.

God communed with me with surprising newness in a union office to re-form me in worker solidarity of compassion and justice. As Brueggemann says:

We will not have a politics of justice and compassion unless we have a religion of God's freedom. We are indeed made in the image of some God. And perhaps we have no more important theological investigation than to discern in whose image we have been made. Our sociology is predictably derived from, legitimated by, and reflective of our theology. And if we gather around a static god of order who only guards the interests of the 'haves', oppression cannot be far behind.<sup>39</sup>

God's freedom is seen in God's gift to stop working for a day of rest (Genesis 2.2). So when "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them" (Genesis 1.27) God created humankind to be free for rest from work. Work is neither the ultimate defining characteristic of God, nor is it to be the defining character for human identity. However, that is the culture of the contemporary capitalist narrative where humankind is created for maximizing profit through exploitative work.

#### 4      Made for Work in God's Image(s)

Our God-given humanity may be known through being made (and re-made) in God's image. So the more I encountered the richness of God's being in my ministry in paid employment, and prayerfully attended to each image that represents an aspect of God's being, the more I was formed and enriched in my own being. As the following examples illustrate, the gift of the 'other' made present in relationships with workers may provide a wealth of experiences of God, which continued to form life-giving characteristics for my vocation within God's covenant community:

- I first knew God's *solidarity* with those struggling for justice at the union dockyard office.
- I learned of God's *suffering* with those suffering from long-term work injury.
- I tasted the *joy* of God's rest at a convivial retreat with my men's group.
- God was my *guide* when I learned to sit in contemplative prayer with veterans suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

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39      Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 7–8.

- I came to know God's *lament* as God wept with those bereaved by work-related death.
- Australian Defence Force veterans led me to identify with the *warrior* God.
- God's *comfort* for those who feel abandoned resonates with the need for comfort by those whose loved ones have died through work-related suicide.

God's grace is both calling and gift for my vocation. Isaiah addressed the captivity of the exiles in Babylon "by directing the community's attention to two **relational** realms: the public sphere (where God is depicted as the creator and divine king or warrior) and the domestic sphere (where God emerges as husband and father or mother)."<sup>40</sup> The God who is present in all things is present in both spheres of Israel's Babylonian captivity, dwarfing all the Babylonian would-be gods, and challenging the assumption they have control over their captives (Isaiah 40.28). So I learned to trust that the God who called me to a new vocation at work was also present there for me. There, I was gifted and equipped by God's grace for the challenges of each new circumstance - with solidarity in the face of injustice, empathy for suffering with long-term injured workers, resting from work and entering into the joy of brotherhood, honouring my tears in shared lament with those bereaved by violent deaths, being guided to trust the silence in contemplative worship with veterans afflicted with PTSD, trusting the warrior's breastplate of faith from battle-hardened veterans, and holding onto the precious gift of comfort for those bereaved by suicide.

God did not send me into the world of work with a mission. Rather, the God of the covenant was already there to meet me and embrace me. In the covenant community of those called into God's life-giving justice and love, I have been sustained by God's presence in its richness and freedom.

## 5 'We Don't Move in Straight Lines'<sup>41</sup>

When injustice is hidden by those who trust their own human effort to create a future that preserves their privilege, God's governance portends dire consequences for such autonomous hubris (Isaiah 39.5–7), as I learned in the long nights of post-surgery in the intensive care unit (ICU), recovering from my

<sup>40</sup> Louis Stulman and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *You are my People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010), 69. Note: these two spheres are relational, not hierarchically or dualistically related.

<sup>41</sup> Grant, *Australia Day*, 3.

second episode in 25 years of open-heart surgery and the repair of an aneurism.<sup>42</sup> I had learned since my first experience at a kitchen table in my first parish that God's judgement on my life and being came at times not of my making, and with effects beyond my imagining. The deconstruction of my identity had a further loss to suffer, a loss which I suggest is vital to confess and learn from if I was to remain creative and compassionate in the face of the violent powers of sin and evil that seek to rule the world of work.

While in ICU, I suffered several frightening, vividly coloured nightmares, where I was subjected to violence and watched my own burial. This was disturbing to the point I was frightened to sleep in case they recurred. Also, I was confined to my bed, feeling helpless and at times hopeless. One night I wondered if I would be better off dead. This was my 'long night of the soul'. It is a painful place, if for no other reason than the painful truths it revealed to me.

As I allowed myself to reflect one long night upon my nightmares, I recalled that in my previous open-heart surgery in 1993, I had been troubled by the realization that my heart was held by human hands. It bothered me that none of the doctors had mentioned this beforehand, and it somehow felt like a violation of the divine order. But as I endured my long night, it came to me that this time, I had knowingly and fully consented to the violence of open-heart surgery, which left me feeling broken and guilty of violating the God-given integrity of my body and soul. My yearning to prolong my life brought me face to face with my capacity for dehumanizing violence—indeed violence against myself and against the creator and giver of life that was truly traumatic.

## 6 Judgement and Mercy

This shocking truth about my self-image as a 'nice, good' man came to me unbidden, unwanted, and as a total surprise. But it led me to question whether my consent to the violence of open-heart surgery was forgivable. I sensed God would forgive me my complicity in violence: this act of taking control of my life and making the decision to knowingly give my heart again to be held by human hands for my life's sake. But it did not sit well with me, this awareness of my capacity for violence, and I asked for a visit from the hospital pastoral care team. When a lay chaplain came on my final morning in ICU, I poured out my heart to him for about fifteen minutes. He only spoke a few words, but every word showed a deep understanding of my shame at my resort to violence

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42 I reflected on my surgery also in John Bottomley, "Listening for what God is Asking of God's Covenant People," *Australian Journal of Mission Studies*, 15:2 (December 2021).

against God and self to preserve my life. I dissolved into tears of relief and release: balm for my wounded soul. This is my sense that God's judgement and mercy do not move in straight lines, to fit my ordered world!

The illusion of my autonomy and the self-justification for my exercise of power and control evaporated in front of me. I knew the gift of my dependence on God's forgiveness for my complicity in an act of violence, and the truth of my confession that the destructive spirit of violence had remained hidden within my complicity with the ideology of white male privilege. Here is the confronting truth. God's judgement of my captivity to the structures and beliefs of parish ministry came through a sacramental moment at work, leading to a new vocation of ministry in people's working life. But work cannot be the source of my liberation, forever. So God's judgement on my formation for a working life of privileged power and control founded on a spirit of violence came through a series of dreams/nightmares during an extended period of (God's) intensive care. Paraphrasing Brueggemann, without the agency of God (in poetic imagination), there is no possibility of outflanking the ideological grip of work's self-serving justifications for its violence and destruction of human life.<sup>43</sup>

My prayer is that others may know what it means to be dependent on the grace of another's love for the gift of judgement and mercy, this grace I have known at a kitchen table, in a union office morning-tea table and in an ICU. And how shall I speak this truth into our workplace culture's need to be transformed with a new covenant of God's judgement and mercy's dignity for all?

Isaiah likens God's devastating judgement to being both purified and tested in a fiery furnace. "I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy" (Isaiah 1.25), and "see, I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tested you in the furnace of adversity" (Isaiah 48.10). Isaiah recognized that bearing God's judgement may bring great confusion and despair, and this has been true of the impact of previously vital elements of my identity being stripped from me at critical times. I perceive two profound truths here. First, God's judgement smelts away dross, and second, it produces a better metal, refined and tested. Isaiah's preaching is an unmistakable call to confess my idolatry, to open my heart to being renewed in God's covenant of peace (Ezek. 37.26), and to be called away from the identity in which I had been formed and thus called and renewed towards loving service. God's judgement broke the power of the binary forms of my formation that distorted reality, and

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43 Brueggemann, *Out of Babylon*, 63.

by God's mercy, brought me into renewed and reconciled relationships with God, neighbour and importantly, my Self.

The gift of God's judgement and mercy is that it continues to relativize and humanize my view of the world and my story about my faith and life. This has given me a way to trust I am in God's hands and so embrace the pain of my idolatry and the injustice of the world. Sadly, David Bosch lived at a time when this was not seen as a viable way of being for a western male. I recognize that David Bosch worked hard in responding to the pain in his life, and the injustice he experienced in the world. If I could have spoken with him, I would have liked to share my story of how hard work kills hard workers,<sup>44</sup> and to hear more of his story than is evident from his own writing. What else but this can we bring to our engagement in solidarity with co-workers engaged in contemporary work? "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6.8).

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# Faith in Action: Entrepreneurship and the Local Church

*Lawrence Ward*

## Abstract

One way to approach Transforming is as partnerships in entrepreneurship that allow the church to train and develop disciples in their work. Collaborations between churches, seminaries, businesses and philanthropic organizations can create incubators for entrepreneurs to create jobs and provide services to the community. This chapter is a case study that analyzes a course created in partnerships that focused on developing urban and suburban entrepreneurs in the church and community. Over a period of three years, the course yielded 40 businesses. This case study demonstrates that entrepreneurship training opens the way to partnerships forming between the church and community. People are willing to take the risk to start a business when given the opportunity and support. Partnerships become essential to launch and sustain successful entrepreneurship incubators.

## Keywords

Partnerships – churches – businesses – job creation – entrepreneurship training

## 1 The Need for Entrepreneurship

Business is important to every country because it provides people with an opportunity to have an income. The demographics of cities have changed and there is a growing demand for new products and services. Entrepreneurship provides a pathway to address these changes. There are many cities and neighborhoods in the United States and in global markets that are in need of economic revitalization. These areas can embrace economic development from entrepreneurs in order for communities to flourish.

The church is called to equip every believer to walk in their vocation, an inward sense of purpose. Ordained ministry can play a dual role inside and

outside the local church. Entrepreneurship is an expression outside of the church walls. While there are callings to be pastors, deacons, and evangelists, there are also callings to be business men and women who develop products and services. Adler and Katoneene identify ways that laypeople engaged in secular jobs or 'worldly' occupations can represent Christ in the world: "The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories and shops, offices and farms, in political parties, government agencies and countless homes; in the press, radio, television, and in the relationship between nations."<sup>1</sup> The intersection of faith and work provides the opportunity to bridge the gap for all believers, including entrepreneurs, in connecting their Sunday to Monday. Garth Eichhorn writes of his experience as an urban missionary. He discovered that his understanding of street chaplaincy could find expression in fresh new ways.<sup>2</sup> I believe the development of microenterprise proved to be fruitful in new ways through a partnership with an urban seminary campus, local pastors and theologians.

The opinion of David Gill, former Chair of the Mockler Center for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and I (Lawrence Ward), as a local pastor, was that while much has been written in theory regarding faith and work, little has been done in praxis. This course and the partnerships involved represent a test of this theory. The Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community course was designed and led by David W. Gill, Workplace Theology and Ethics Specialist, and myself (Lawrence Ward), as a pastor and Entrepreneurship Training Specialist serving as co-teacher. Gill has been a serial entrepreneur for decades, mostly in the educational world. He is a professor of workplace theology and business ethics and has extensive experience working as an MBA ethics teacher as well as a small and medium size business consultant. Ward is long-time pastor of Abundant Life Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts and has years of experience as a credentialed entrepreneurship trainer, especially working with urban young people and small business owners.

According to Gill, the course needed to equip pastors, current and future, and other church leaders with the chance to create job-training through entrepreneurship coaching programs. These programs could be based in local churches and serve unemployed members and neighbours. The church was to

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1 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, "Laity", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn, edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 659 [658–664].

2 Garth Eichhorn, "Australians at Play – Entertainment Precincts as a context for Mission," *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

be a third force, drawing on skills and abilities already present in congregations to coach those who needed to find or create work. Ordained ministry, when exposed to entrepreneurship will be better equipped to relate and serve their congregants who have ministry callings outside the local church. Investing in entrepreneurship can be an innovative solution to address the outside gap between the church and the world.

Clergy care for the souls of entrepreneurs and business people. Because of the demands and pressures of their work as business owners, spiritual formation can provide inner strength. Clergy can participate in the spiritual formation of a business owner by praying with and for them in their place of employment. When they visit the business location, pray and offer their support to their employees it is a form of pastoral care.

Entrepreneurs are job creators. When there are more entrepreneurs, there will be more jobs created for those seeking. Where there are thriving businesses there will be opportunities for people to provide an income for their families and increase their standard of living.<sup>3</sup>

New and creative ministries need to include new businesses. W. Jay Moon's chapter in this volume entitled "Igniting Mission in the Marketplace: Imagining Clergy and Laity at Work Together" introduced church leaders to a new idea.<sup>4</sup> Moon suggests closing the inner gap between clergy and laity and the outer gap between the church and the world. He argued for the need to expand the influence of the gospel through entrepreneurial church planting. While not every entrepreneur is called to be a church planter, Moon makes a strong point that people, whether in the church or outside, want to engage with business men and women who are honest and run their businesses with integrity.

Entrepreneurship can give hope to low-income neighborhoods and areas that are job deserts. When creative ideas are turned into businesses, the result is income generation from people in various communities. For David Gill, the church can contribute something significant in the area of economic development with God's help. He writes in his syllabus regarding the United States of America:

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3 Center for American Entrepreneurship, "Why is Entrepreneurship Important?," <https://www.startupsusa.org/why-is-entrepreneurship-important>. Accessed 12 August 2022.

4 Jay Moon, "Igniting Mission in the Marketplace: Imagining Clergy and Laity at Work Together," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

Rather than just looking to existing businesses or to government agencies to create jobs, let's ask "what can the church do?" Rather than blaming Washington or Wall Street let's rise up with God's help and do something in the church! Within our churches are simultaneously many who need and want to find meaningful work and others with skills, experiences, networks, resources to help their brothers and sisters find or create new business and work opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

The church is called to be salt and light. Adler and Katoneene suggest that the laity of the church should provide ministry in three areas of witness, service and unity: "The real letter written to the world today does not consist of words. We Christian people, wherever we are, are a letter from Christ to the world."<sup>6</sup> Whether it be spiritual or social the church should be a beacon of hope to the lost and disenfranchised. The needs and challenges in our world will take innovation and, in some cases, a reinvention to reach the world for Christ. Hence entrepreneurs can be understood as engaging in the *missio Dei* as they develop products and services to bring redemptive solutions to a broken world.

There are people both inside and outside the church that need financial stability. Some people are in need of employment. Others need better jobs with higher wages. The church provides a community where there are resources to help people find and do good work. There needs to be a plan, the faith to act upon it, the tools to leverage resources, and the capacity to build a model strong enough to sustain growth. As entrepreneurs are raised up and empowered by the church to go out into the marketplace, they will be able to connect and serve where people are in need of the gospel. For Trevor Bach: "The nation is changing economically, yet American inequality has been rising for decades, as the country's richest continue to grow richer, most Americans' economic fortunes have largely stood still."<sup>7</sup> Entrepreneurship can be a vehicle for closing economic gaps for the working poor. It provides an additional income stream to supplement the tight budgets of families struggling for more income. As the prices of items and the cost of living continue to rise families must come up with ways to increase their income. Whether the intention is to bridge the

5 David W. Gill, *Syllabus for Entrepreneurship in Church and Community*. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus, Spring 2015.

6 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, "Laity", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn, edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 659 [658–664].

7 Trevor Bach, "The 10 US Cities with the Biggest Income Inequality Gaps," US News, September 21, 2020. <https://www.usnews.com/news/cities/articles/2020-09-21/us-cities-with-the-biggest-income-inequality-gaps>. Accessed 12 August 2022.

outer gap between the church and the world, the inner gap between the clergy and laity, or the economic gap between the working poor and the upper class, the key is to raise up more entrepreneurs.

Every disciple of Jesus needs to be nurtured in their faith and work. In addition to their spiritual development, entrepreneurs need training, access to capital, and mentoring to be successful in their work. For Mike McMillan, freelancers provide goods and or services within their specialties to businesses for short-term work. Because of the nature of their contracts, these freelancers are micro-entrepreneurs as they respond to local conditions of the economy and fill a particular niche.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, David Gill states that The Entrepreneurship in Church and Community course is about mobilizing our churches to create new businesses. Our churches are full of people with niche talents and skills who need and want to work. These churches also need to be full of people who know how to start and run a good business.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 Theology of Work and Entrepreneurship

Theologically, the Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community course drew on a creation narrative as a part of its foundation. This creation theme invited the entrepreneur and the church to consider job creation and embrace entrepreneurship in church and community as a way to empower God's people. Genesis comes from a Greek word that means beginning or origin. This first book of the Old Testament was traditionally ascribed to Moses written to tell the story of how things came into being. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, God is described as a creator. God worked to fill the earth which was dark and void. Work is the activity that God did daily over six days to bring order, beauty, and functionality to the world. "If the church is to be an effective force in the social and political sphere, our first task is to laicize our thought about it. We stand before a great historic task - the task of restoring the lost unity between worship and work."<sup>10</sup>

There are three foundational principles for a theology of work in the creation account. First, God intentionally created the world and everything in it.

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8 Mike McMillan, "The Gig Economy and Entrepreneurship," *Business 2 Community*, February 19, 2019. <https://www.onlinesalesguidetip.com/the-gig-economy-and-entrepreneurship/>. Accessed 22 August 2022.

9 David W. Gill, "Entrepreneurship in Church & Community," *Flyer*, 2015, 31 January, 2014, also 2015. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

10 Adler and Katoneene, "Laity", 581.

Scripture informs us that the Triune God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit were at work together moving and speaking things into existence (Genesis 1.2). God in Scripture works with the material world to bring order and beauty. Creating things takes work. God saw that the world needed organization to fulfill its purpose and function. It takes work to bring things into harmony and sustain balance. The Triune God is still at work upholding all things by the word of his power.

Second, God voluntarily chose to create and bring order to the chaos of the earth (Genesis 1; Revelations 4.11). The Triune God moved and spoke order to the formless and empty universe. Entrepreneurs are creators and innovators who have the opportunity to bring beauty and order to broken situations and communities through their work. Their products and services are continued expressions of a creative God.

Third, human beings, the image-bearers of God, have been given the capacity to participate in creating goods and services from the resources that God provides as the source of all things. According to Daryl Aaron, God works through creation in order to carry out God's divine intention.<sup>11</sup> God uses human beings as agents in the earth to create. Embedded within the creation mandate is the human call to work in God's image by bearing fruit that will multiply.<sup>12</sup> The entrepreneur is a reflection of the creative nature of God as they develop various goods and services. People as God's representative carry on where God left off. For philosopher Al Wolters, this is what human development of the earth means.<sup>13</sup>

Work is not only the act of creating but it includes caring for what is created. God creates human beings and then works for them as their Provider. [God] forms a man (Genesis 2:7), plants a garden for him and waters it (Genesis 2:6, 8), and fashions a wife for him (Genesis 2:21–22). The rest of the Bible tells us that God continues this work as Provider, caring for the world by watering and cultivating the ground (Psalm 104:10–22), giving food to all he has made, giving help to all who suffer, and caring for the needs of every living thing (Psalm 145:14–16).<sup>14</sup>

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11 Daryl Aaron, *Understanding Theology in 15 Minutes a Day* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2012), 66.

12 Will Messenger, ed., *Theology of Work Bible Commentary: Genesis through Revelation*, Theology of Work Project (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 15.

13 Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 58 Kindle.

14 Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 35.

The first three commands for Adam and Eve were to be fruitful, multiply and rule the earth. God had blessed and empowered Adam and Eve with the capacity to perpetuate the life that they received from God. According to Tim Keller filling the earth is not just procreation, it is filling the world with human society.<sup>15</sup> Included in the mandate is to rule the earth. This does not mean to force or conquer but to be a steward of God's creation. God placed humans in an environment, gave them provision and invited to them serve God through their work in the garden.

People have a purpose in God's plan for creation. Humans have been given the privilege to participate with God in the work God wants to be done on earth. Adam was given the privilege of naming the animals (Genesis 2.19–20) and cultivating the garden (Genesis 2.15). Work was one of the vehicles that God used for humans to be fruitful, multiply and rule the earth. God decided to use humans to demonstrate Divine glory through their work. God breathed into Adam, and he became a living soul. When God breathed life into Adam all his human faculties and abilities to move, reason, and communicate came alive. Adam was then able to relate and respond to the presence and voice of God.

Work was given to Adam before the fall. Work was never meant to be a curse but a gift to humanity. After the fall work became toilsome, frustrating and difficult (Genesis 3.17–19). God has chosen work as a vehicle to bring shalom to creation. Humans can participate in the pursuit of shalom in areas of justice, healing, sharing resources, and doing good work. The Bible is a story of redemption. Throughout the Old Testament God used men and women as instruments to do God's Divine work. The Scriptures mention men such as Noah who built an ark (Gen.6:14–16), Nehemiah who restored a broken wall (Neh. 2:11–18), and unsung leaders such as Bezalel who was a chief artisan of the Tabernacle (Ex. 35:30–33; 36:1–2). Women like Deborah served as a judge and a prophetess for Israel (Jud. 4:4–5). She inspired many people who sought her wisdom and leadership. Lydia, a wealthy business woman, was the first Christian in Europe and was instrumental in the launching of a new church with Paul and Silas (Acts 16:14–15; 16:40). Each of these men and women partnered with God to bring redemption through work.

Jesus Christ who is the last Adam, has come to redeem through his work on the cross, healing what is broken. Christ's redemptive work gives us peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with those around us, and peace with his creation. Jesus has invited us as his followers to participate in *missio Dei* (the

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15 Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 56.



mission of God). As the church we are called to be salt and light, so it is the good works that we do in Christ's name that glorifies him. Whatever we do in word or deed we are to do for the glory of God (Col. 3.17).

David Gill connects the mission of God to entrepreneurship and the glory of God stating:

We need jobs to be able to survive and provide for our families. We also need jobs to be able to create goods and services that meet the needs of the people and glorify our Lord. All of us need jobs simply to express who we are as men and women made in the image of God the Creator and Redeemer.<sup>16</sup>

We are partners in the *missio Dei* to bring hope and salvation to the world. God has through the Holy Spirit endowed believers with gifts to be used to edify the church and to impact the community. Good work makes way for restoration and flourishing. In the beginning the Genesis account shows us that God created the material world. God sustains it by the word of God's power and God will one day make all things new. The work we are called to do as Christians facilitates God's plan to bring total restoration.

Founders syndrome can be a struggle for entrepreneurs. As the founder of a business there is a temptation to idolise the business. Entrepreneurs are stewards under God not owners. They have been entrusted with the responsibility to manage the business and its resources for the flourishing of humanity and the common good.

### 3 The Value of Partnerships and Sponsors

Organizational partnerships are key to building business start-ups. Relationships built and nurtured prior to the start of the course were an important factor in the recruitment and creation of the course. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, particularly The Mockler Center, along with urban and suburban churches, the Kern Foundation, Citizens Bank, and business leaders all contributed resources to help run the course. Once leaders from these organizations agreed to the vision, the Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course was approved by the seminary.

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<sup>16</sup> Gill, "Entrepreneurship in Church & Community".

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary hosted the class on the Boston Campus by providing space for the class to meet on Saturday mornings. The classroom had all the necessary technology for the duration of the course and for the entrepreneurs to present their business plans at the end of the semester. David Gill chaired The Mockler Center with the mission to promote Christian ethics and values in the workplace. The many programs and resources at The Mockler Center are designed to assist pastors and their congregations connect their faith to their work, an apt home for this course.

The entrepreneurs and mentors represented a cross-section of churches from the city and suburban areas. Tapping into their networks, Gill and Ward encouraged pastors, current Gordon-Conwell students, alumni, as well as lay leaders to apply. Through the generous support of the pastoral leadership from the Abundant Life Church, Park Street Church, Anointed Baptist, Bethel AME, Cambridge Community Outreach Tabernacle, Liberty Church, Christ the King, Pentecostal Tabernacle, Spirit and Power Living Word Ministries, Life Church, and Morning Star Baptist Church, and others, we were able to recruit students and entrepreneurs from local churches.

One participant had a vision to provide singing lessons to young people of all ages. Essential to her vision was gratitude for the value of partners and sponsors:

Lift Up Your Voice (LUYV) is a voice lessons discovery service, which matches your singing goals with a professional voice instructor. LUYV has now thankfully been in business for a year and a half and as of year-end 2014, turned a small profit! With the generous grant money we received as a part of the inaugural Entrepreneurship in Faith & Community course ... LUYV was able to afford primary start-up costs such as web development, business registration fees, and legal counsel.<sup>17</sup>

Start-up businesses like LUYV found the support they needed to get their business off the ground.

The students were selected according to a range of criteria. These included a deep and genuine faith in Jesus Christ, a love for the church, a vision for community economic growth and development, leadership and interpersonal skills, organizational management skills, solid character, ethics and reliability, a self-starter and initiator personality, persistence and follow-through skills, financial management ethics and skills and maturity and flexibility.

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<sup>17</sup> Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, Voice instructor.

Once students were formally registered, they were each provided with entrepreneurs who could mentor them during the course. Gill gave the final approval for the entrepreneur mentees, and by the end of the second or third week of the course, the entrepreneurs were invited to attend the class with their mentors. The presence of the mentors and entrepreneurs side-by-side in class supported their communication.

The Kern Family Foundation is passionate about supporting entrepreneurship initiatives. The Foundation generously supported the program with grant funding to extend scholarship opportunities to students to defray tuition, costs, provide textbooks, offer working capital for start-up cost, and award prize money for the best business launch presentation. All the organizations involved played a key role and leveraged their influence and resources to support the entrepreneurs. It takes many hours of relational building to create trusting relationships to support programs of this kind. Because of the collaborative support, we were able to successfully bring this vision into reality.

#### 4 Course Design and Objectives

The Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course was created to investigate an aspect of faith and work through the intersection of the church and community at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The course was designed for a person who wanted to start a business from scratch.<sup>18</sup> For eight weeks, these entrepreneurs were introduced through class instruction to a theology of work and ethics and the mechanics of business development. The course was offered for three years and averaged twelve students per class.

The course was a way to break down the wall between clergy and laity as it facilitated bridge building to integrate work, worship, and service. R. Paul Stevens addressed this wall by defining ministry as a service to God on behalf of God in the church and the world.<sup>19</sup> The purpose of the course expressed this ministry of service, first as pastors and congregations learnt the principles of business and second, as new entrepreneurs launched new businesses. The course participants consisted of students who were pastors and lay church

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18 As a result of this course 40 businesses were started providing goods and services. Enterprises included 3 beauty supply; 4 clothing; 4 technology; 16 services ranging from photography, to house cleaning, vocal training and consulting; 3 food services; 3 international services; 4 community-based stores; 2 educational and game-based; and a magazine.

19 R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), Kindle, 134.

leaders that either owned a business or had business experience who served as mentors to promising entrepreneurs.

The initial step in the curriculum was to assess whether one had the traits of an entrepreneur. For an entrepreneur to be successful, they need to be able to learn and quickly apply business principles. Entrepreneurship requires multi-disciplinary approaches in building an active business. This includes figuring out what business each participant wants to be in, how to develop a mission, and create a strategy to accomplish business goals. Securing and managing finances, marketing, using technology, and human resources are also disciplines that an entrepreneur must continue to learn.

The course included weekly assignments, writing summaries on the key ideas from assigned readings. In addition, the students were required to write a start-up business plan. A short questionnaire encouraged the students to think comprehensively about their start-up. For example, business name, mission, core values, marketing strategy, and necessary technology.

Each class began with a brief devotional by David Gill on the subject of faith and work, followed by prayer. The topic for the session was presented for the day, along with an opportunity during class for students and entrepreneurs to meet together. For eight weeks Gill and Ward laid the foundations for entrepreneurship through the vehicles of biblical study, theology, and ethics. A range of topics were covered. These included what does the Bible teach about the reality and purpose of work, leadership, money, communication; what does Christian ethics teach us about building a healthy workplace culture, resolving difficulties, and doing the right thing in God's eyes. Based on this biblical and theological foundation, Gill and Ward offering practical nuts and bolts of starting a new business.

## 5 Themes

Very few seminary graduates are ever able to take business courses particularly in the area of business start-up competencies. Church leaders and alumni can learn a great deal of transferable skills for ministry and working in the marketplace. In what follows, I (Lawrence Ward), as one of the course organizers identify a number of themes that emerged through this praxis case study. In places, these themes are supported by feedback from course participants.

### 5.1 *Curriculum Focused on the Theology of Work*

The study of theology of work provided by The Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course was new for a number of participants. There are many

devoted Christians who have separated their Sunday worship from their work. If we are going to be fully engaged in the mission of Christ we must integrate our worship, service and work. Education in theology of work can bridge the gap for Christians in many ways including how to use their work as a witness for Christ. For participants, their perspective and understanding of work was radically changed because of their exposure to a theology of work.

People were eager to learn about entrepreneurship that was faith-based. Combining topics on workplace theology with entrepreneurship training gave participants a fresh perspective on how God valued their work and that business matters to God. There were some who began with some skepticism because it was very unusual for a seminary to offer entrepreneurship courses. David Gill's vision and strategic planning offered a new approach to raising up entrepreneurs in the Boston, Massachusetts area.

The theology of work gave all the participants a new paradigm regarding how God cares about business. The following statements exhibit the sentiments of the entrepreneurs at the completion of the course.

The theology of work for our devotional time gave me a fresh perspective that God should have first place in my business. I like how the scriptures were taught and how it connected with doing business in a way that pleases God and serves our customers ... The course equipped me with the business skills that I needed to grow to where I am now.<sup>20</sup>

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Jesignz Graphix continues to grow and I have been able to gain several new clients within the past two years. These new clients also include a few churches and faith-based organizations, which is a sector that I was really looking to work with more. With the money I was awarded I was able to get some necessary equipment and software, which include photography gear to go along with my camera. With this I am now able to offer more services to my clientele including photography and video production.<sup>21</sup>

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20 Participant statement, *Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community*, Landscaping entrepreneur.

21 Participant statement, *Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community*, Graphic design entrepreneur.

The theology of work teaching was an important part of the course for me because it helped to put the work and God in perspective. Work was just a necessary thing that paid the bills before I heard that my work was a ministry that gives glory to God. Now I know that my business can bless others and bring flourishing to the community.<sup>22</sup>

These participant statements show an understanding of ministry as being beyond the four walls of a church building and able to touch lives through good work.

### 5.2 *The Importance of Relationships*

The Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course had some key partners which were essential in making it happen. The success of the course was due to a collaborative effort of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, The Kern Family Foundation, and Citizens Bank. David Gill, the professor of record on this project created the curriculum and co-taught the course. Various pastors, mentors, and business leaders served as guest speakers throughout the semesters.

It takes time and effort to build trusting relationships. Boston, Massachusetts is a relatively small place and relationships are very important in order for programs like this to succeed. The relational effort that was made to build this program made it easier to work together. If another city were to do a program such as this it is important that they take time to build the relational component first. Relational capital is required.

It also takes funding to encourage entrepreneurs who require working capital to start their businesses. Without funding the ideas will not flourish. The majority of the businesses received working capital. In addition to funding, training, and mentoring were also crucial to ensure longevity and provide the technical support entrepreneurs required in the start-up phase. Each entrepreneur enrolled in the course was assigned a faith-based business mentor. Having a mentor with business experience was important to the entrepreneurs in their new business ventures.

The new entrepreneurs were asked to give some feedback on their experience of being in class and learning from a variety of speakers and mentors. Some comments from participants are illustrative:

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22 Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, Hair saloon entrepreneur.

Meeting people who were in business and starting a business was a valuable experience for me. I learned so much from my mentor and others through the discussion time.<sup>23</sup>

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The seed money was very helpful because it gave me resources to purchase a lawn mower, leaf blower and business cards. It was just what I needed to get the essential equipment to start the landscaping business. Without the funds it would have been a struggle because I had nothing saved to get those items.<sup>24</sup>

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I am thankful for the grant funding that allowed me to start my business and for the follow-up that was generously shared. I feel very supported by the leaders and the entire community. Currently, I still hear from Dr. Gill, Professor Ward and some classmates who keep in touch with me. They are so encouraging and I enjoy connecting with them from time to time.<sup>25</sup>

Starting a business can be very intimidating because everything is a new experience for the entrepreneur. Having an experienced business person involved can give an entrepreneur confidence in their first steps in business. Mentors worked with entrepreneurs in developing the mechanics of their business plan.

### 5.3 *Broad Value of Business and Entrepreneurship Training*

Entrepreneurship training has broad value for many participants. Although there were people who attended the entrepreneurship class who never started their business idea, the business skills that we taught were transferable to the workplace. Entrepreneurship takes courage and determination. There are times when an entrepreneur has to work very long hours and they may not

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23 Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, Communications entrepreneur.

24 Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, Landscaping entrepreneur.

25 Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, Hair saloon entrepreneur.

see any profits immediately. Being an entrepreneur takes risk and foresight to make changes as needed. Hence, entrepreneurship training can teach people the importance of being resourceful, taking initiative, working in teams, and financial management. There are jobs that require an employee to work independently. Entrepreneurship training will give them the tools to make decisions and be responsible for their outcomes. While the outcomes varied, each entrepreneur was able to explain the skills and knowledge developed as a result of this course. Some comments from participants are illustrative:

What I learned from the course was that there were entrepreneurs that didn't know how to open a business account and how to process the paperwork. There were some entrepreneurs that were shocked that they had to have a business account.<sup>26</sup>



As a business owner I think it is important to help people translate their idea into a real business. There are many ideas that can come to a person's mind that never become a business because it takes time to learn the steps to turn an idea into a real business.<sup>27</sup>

The entrepreneurs were very grateful for the support they received to start their business. The theology of work gave all the participants a new paradigm about how God cares about business. Ministry was understood as going beyond the four walls of the church building and touching lives through good work. It was a joy to see the impact that the course made on the students and the entrepreneurs. While not all the businesses have continued, there were valuable lessons learned about being a business owner that can become transferable skills in the future. This Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course could be the start of something revolutionary for seminaries, churches, and communities.

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26 Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, banking sector employee.

27 Participant statement, Entrepreneurship in The Church and Community, financial sector employee.



## 6 What I Would Do Differently?

The Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course showed the value of partnerships and these could be further developed in future courses. A focus group could be conducted to develop a needs analysis of the potential students. The focus group would consist of a cross-section of micro business leaders, potential entrepreneurs and people who could serve as mentors. At the conclusion of the course, a monthly support group meeting opportunity could provide further opportunities for entrepreneurs and mentors to relate together. Starting a business can be tough emotionally on the business owner. Adding a support group is one way to follow up and would provide entrepreneurs with a safe place to receive encouragement, connection and ongoing business development skills.

Another improvement could be to include more mentors with previous experience in the specific areas of the potential businesses. This way the entrepreneurs could learn from someone with demonstrated experience in the area. All of the mentors had business experience but not necessarily specialty experience in mentee's budding business.

## 7 Conclusion and Future Directions

This paper has taken a praxis approach to transforming work. It has demonstrated that there are business leaders who desire to integrate their faith and work. At the same time, effective training is needed. Partnerships with seminaries, churches and businesses are an effective strategy for equipping entrepreneurs. Seminaries like Gordon-Conwell that offer courses on the theology of work and entrepreneurship in the urban context can equip marketplace disciples to impact their communities. These marketplace disciples can increase economic development in the city and close the wealth gap between the rich and the poor. They can begin marketplace ministry in their local churches. This provides opportunities to draw youth and youth adults through programs that invite them to use their creativity and innovative ideas to become young entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship clusters can be developed and maintained to serve as a venue for start-up business owners to receive ongoing support after the course has concluded. New businesses can benefit from relationships that are mutually supportive of each other. They can find ways to patronize each other's businesses and leverage their resources to reach new markets. One example of this is the Thrive and Grow Boston that was co-founded by Ward.

This gathering brings together faith-based business owners and entrepreneurs monthly to learn the theology of work, share their stories, and learn business skills to further their education and growth as a business owner. By providing a resource for networking, businesses in the profit and non-profit sectors can come together and discover ways to work together.

With a connection to a seminary, faculty and entrepreneurs can publish materials that can help other entrepreneurs to start businesses and seminaries to start courses in urban environments. This is an effective model that can be replicated in other cities, especially when seminaries and business schools are willing to work together. Additional workshops in faith and work for business leaders who cannot attend a full course can also be offered.

Seminaries with a vision to reach people who are entrepreneurs and business leaders can make it a part of their ongoing curricula for students who are going into ministry. Seminaries can recruit subject matter experts and build a team of faculty that are able to serve marketplace leaders, entrepreneurs, and the church with ongoing training and support. These trainings can be helpful as they go into churches to develop marketplace leaders for Christ. Without the vision and faculty to make it happen, seminaries will not be able to serve entrepreneurs and marketplace leaders effectively.

Churches have resources that can be used to develop and grow entrepreneurs. One idea that one of the student business owners brought to my attention was that there are churches that do not utilize their spaces during the weekdays. Buildings can be used as entrepreneurship incubators. Churches can provide space for entrepreneurs to meet with clients and employees upon request. Churches also give spiritual support to the entrepreneur through prayer, Bible teachings, and discipleship models of faith and work. The church can become a discipleship making organization that includes vocation. The natural networks in churches can be utilized to share resources.

Seasoned Christian business owners and entrepreneurs who can serve as trainers, coaches and mentors for entrepreneurs are needed. Having someone who has experience and knowledge to provide encouragement during the hard seasons can be valuable to a new start-up. Business owners can serve as subject matter experts who can provide their wisdom, knowledge and experience to emerging business owners. They can be used to impart knowledge via books, online trainings and podcasts.

The Entrepreneurship in the Church and Community course was an entrepreneurial step in itself. The Gill and Ward combination was a great experience in learning how to connect the seminary with the church to serve entrepreneurs in the city. This project strengthened their faith and bore much fruit in a short time. Gill and Ward do not regard any entrepreneur whose business

did not succeed as a failure. The experience itself caused them to think more broadly and at greater depth about their vocation. God has given gifts to every person, and it is up to us to find places to use them for his glory and the flourishing of our communities. This is best demonstrated in the feedback from one participant:

The main lesson that I've learned is that no one is going to care about my business more than me. No one is going to work as hard as me to see the business be successful. I've learned that most people want to come work to see and take what they can from you and not so much what they could contribute to the success of a business. The \$500 I used towards marketing material and supplies needed for the salon. The grant came at a perfect time when I was in need. This journey has its moments of uncertainty and this program has really helped me maintain. Thank you for being there for us as we embark on life in business.<sup>28</sup>

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# Professionals in Hospital Chaplaincy Provision

*Nigel Pegram*

## Abstract

This chapter examines models of chaplaincy provision in Australia and in particular the ways in which professional clergy may or may not be used in the provision of these services. Three distinct models were discovered. Using qualitative methods, this study explores what led to these approaches as well as evaluating the benefits and risks involved in using these models in private or state-run hospitals. Of interest in the context of missional engagement is that two models break the norms of engaging only professional, degree-qualified clergy as chaplains. These findings are evaluated as what Bosch describes as a change in mission from 'clergy only' to involving the whole people of God. While there is some support for this being viewed as a democratisation of ministry, Bosch's view is seen as idealistic, failing to account for the important contextual factors driving these changes. The article concludes that these alternate models have benefits which should be considered when beginning or evaluating models of provision of hospital chaplaincy. However, as these models are relatively new, long-term impacts are unclear.

## Keywords

Chaplaincy – clergy – ministry – democratization – call – gift

## 1 Introduction

Chaplaincy has a long history and has displayed a variety of forms, both in terms of place (such as the military, schools, or workplaces) and method of provision. Throughout this history, chaplaincy has been provided by both volunteers and

professional clergy,<sup>1</sup> though not necessarily in equal numbers.<sup>2</sup> Ryan observes that in particular chaplaincy has moved from being an ‘ancillary’ service, an extension of the local parish in the 20th Century, to being a ‘primary meeting point between religion and society’ in the 21st Century.<sup>3</sup> This extension beyond being part of parish ministry may be seen in the more focused area of hospital-based chaplaincy. Believers who are hospitalized may have the clergy from their own place of worship visit them. Chaplains may be employed by a hospital and visit during their ‘rounds’ of the wards. Some hospitals, notably those begun by religious organizations, also have volunteers providing some form of pastoral care, while leaving the sacraments to employed chaplains or visiting clergy.

As author, I have had experience in hospitals, as a nurse and chaplain, and in the military, as a soldier in the Army Reserve. I have also been responsible for military chaplaincy for a denomination and as an ordained minister for over 30 years. During that time, I have observed a pattern in Australia in many chaplaincy contexts in that while pastoral care might be provided by laypersons, chaplaincy was usually provided by professionals. In addition, the delivery was usually organized along denominational lines, with appointments being made by denominational bodies. This pattern was particularly strong in highly structured, government-funded environments like the military and hospitals.<sup>4</sup>

In more recent years, I have observed another model of chaplaincy provision which differed from this professional, denominationally focused delivery pattern. In this case, both clergy and lay Christians were providing chaplaincy services in a state hospital, with the service being funded by that hospital. This prompted a range of questions. What other models are used to provide hospital chaplaincy services? What are the strengths and limitations of various

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1 Christian churches use a range of terms to denote those in professional ministry: clergy, minister, pastor and chaplain, for example. For simplicity's sake in this paper the term clergy denotes ordained, professional ministry staff, while laity is used for anyone who is not clergy. As chaplaincy may be provided by those from other faiths, this terminology is also used to represent professionals from other faiths even though they may not use these terms themselves.

2 John Caperon, “Chaplaincy and Traditional Church Structures,” in *Chaplaincy and Christian Theology*, edited by John Caperon, Andrew Todd and James Walters (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2017), 119–20.

3 Ben Ryan, “Theology and Models of Chaplaincy,” in *Chaplaincy and Christian Theology*, edited by John Caperon, Andrew Todd, and James Walters (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2017), 80–81, emphasis in original.

4 School chaplaincy is an exception here. The reason for this difference goes beyond the scope of this paper. While interesting and worthy of investigation, it is not directly pertinent to this research.

models of provision, and what has led to the selection of these models over the professional model? What might any differences or changes over time imply for missional thinking and workplace ministry? The term ‘model’ here refers to the structure used to fund and govern the provision of chaplaincy services in a hospital, rather than in the sense used by Ryan when speaking of models of chaplaincy.<sup>5</sup> The author commenced a research project in response to these questions.<sup>6</sup>

This paper particularly focuses on how this research addresses questions surrounding the professionalization of chaplaincy. Bosch observed in the missiological literature thirty years ago: ‘The movement away from ministry as the monopoly of ordained men to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God, ordained as well as non-ordained, is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today’?<sup>7</sup> Bosch, however, has been critiqued by his peers as being something of an idealist in his approach, specifically, that his theologising fails to consider the important role context plays.<sup>8</sup> Can the changes in provision of hospital chaplaincy be understood as examples of the broad changes found in the church and society as identified by Bosch? Are we seeing in hospital chaplaincy a move away from professional, particularly clergy-based ministry? In addition, we will ask what are the implications of these changes? Of particular interest is whether these current expressions of hospital chaplaincy likely to be robust and sustainable in the future or not.

One might also address the above questions using other conversation partners who note the increasing emphasis on the ministry of the laity. Adler and Katoneene<sup>9</sup> are a secondary interlocutor. They also note the rise of the role of the laity in the 20th Century, with the laity having a ministry, being ‘God’s people present in the world’.<sup>10</sup> While Bosch will be the primary conversation partner for this chapter, Adler and Kanoneene’s description of the ministry of the laity will also be part of the later conversation.

5 Ryan, “Theology and Models of Chaplaincy.”

6 Ethical clearance for the research was obtained through the Alphacrucis University College ethics committee.

7 Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (New York: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 467–478.

8 See, for example, J. Kevin Livingston, ‘The Legacy of David J. Bosch’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23, no. 1 (1999): 28; T.A. Mofokeng, ‘Mission Theology from an African Perspective: A Dialogue with David Bosch’, *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 18, no. 1 (1990): 170.

9 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, ‘Laity’, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

10 Adler and Katoneene, 664. See especially the section entitled ‘Theological concepts of the ministry of the laity’.

Below, the research project will first be described, and the findings reported. Then the findings will be considered in light of Bosch's thesis. Do the findings support Bosch, or his critics, or are there other factors which might be driving the observed changes? Finally some of the practical implications for current expressions of lay hospital chaplaincy and its potential expansion will be considered.

The author's positionality is important for this project. The author's above-mentioned experience in nursing, the military and as a chaplain provides a breadth of perspective on the provision of chaplaincy in Australia. The researcher's hospital chaplaincy experience includes both providing care as a church minister visiting parishioners in hospital and as part of the chaplaincy team in one of the services examined below. Rather than taking a dichotomous perspective, where one is an insider or an outsider, this paper views the author as an insider-outsider researcher.<sup>11</sup> If managed wisely, this positioning can enhance research outcomes.<sup>12</sup> In addition, it was also decided that greater benefit would accrue from including in the research the unique service with which the author had been involved. The benefits of being an insider include easier engagement within the culture and norms of a research site, easier building of trust with participants, facility with framing the research, and a deeper understanding brought to the research and analysis processes.<sup>13</sup> The author has not been actively involved in chaplaincy at the site concerned for some years. Thus, while there is familiarity, distance has increased, mitigating much of the risk. Unconscious bias toward that model was addressed by including a wider range of voices in the discussion, ensuring a fuller picture, and the deliberate focus of specific questions about the limitations or drawbacks in that model of provision. The benefit of the insider perspectives accrued as the researcher was able to provide historical and experiential information which illuminated some aspects of the respondents' narratives both in the questions asked and in the construction of this report.

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11 Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, "The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(1) (March 2009): 54–63.

12 Dwyer and Buckle, 60–62.

13 Jenny Fleming, "Recognizing and Resolving the Challenges of Being an Insider Researcher in Work-Integrated Learning," *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning* 19(3) (2018): 311–20; Lesley J. Bikos, "An Insider's Perspective on Research with Policewomen in Canada," in *The Craft of Qualitative Research: A Handbook*, edited by Steven W. Kleinknecht and Lisa-Jo K. van den Scott (Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars, 2018), 78–84; Steven W. Kleinknecht and Lisa-Jo K. van den Scott, eds, *The Craft of Qualitative Research: A Handbook* (Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars, 2018), 75–76.



A qualitative case study methodology was selected to allow the explication of a broad picture of a 'real life' scenario,<sup>14</sup> to get to the 'what' and 'why' of each model of provision. An important consideration was the sample to use in the study. The hospital context which initially generated the question, hereafter referred to as hospital 'A', was a state-run hospital in Australia. The project would have been unwieldy if one chose all state-funded hospitals, especially when one added in hospitals of all sizes, including nursing posts in remote and regional locations. Also, some state-funded hospitals do not have chaplaincy services. Smaller and country hospitals are frequently served by local clergy only.<sup>15</sup> As hospital A had a formal chaplaincy agreement in place, the decision was made to limit the sample to hospitals which also had formal chaplaincy structures. An additional decision was made to limit the sample using size and geography for practical reasons. This resulted in a pool which contained six state-funded hospitals or hospital groups, plus a denominationally run hospital group.<sup>16</sup>

Chaplains and chaplaincy service directors were interviewed. Audio of the interviews was recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis using NVivo. The questions including clarifying the qualifications required for service as a chaplain, processes of chaplain selection and review, governance and reporting structures and changes in the service provision over time.

As the role of professional clergy in hospital chaplaincy provision is the focus of this paper, Bosch's discussion of the changes in professional ministry will be used as a lens in considering the findings.<sup>17</sup> In addition, two chapters in this volume will also be used. Fagg's research showing increasing professionalization

14 Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins, 2014), 53; Alan R. Johnson, "Case Studies," in *Missiologial Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Marvin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis (Littleton, CO: William Carey, 2018), 145–50; Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2) (April 2006): 223.

15 While this is based on the author's experience living and in ministry in two states of Australia, not empirical evidence, it is noteworthy that a similar pattern was observed in the USA. See Wendy Cadge, Jeremy Freese, and Nicholas A. Christakis, "The Provision of Hospital Chaplaincy in the United States: A National Overview," in *Evidence-Based Healthcare Chaplaincy: A Research Reader*, edited by George Fitchett, Kelsey B White, and Kathryn Lyndes (London, UK: Jessica Kingsley, 2018).

16 The specifics of that limitation will not be revealed to retain confidentiality. One chaplaincy service, representing two of the tertiary hospitals was not included in the data at the time of writing due to logistic challenges arranging interviews with the director.

17 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 334–41, 478–85.

in youth work<sup>18</sup> raises some questions to address as does Sloane's<sup>19</sup> description of a profession as having technical skills, arcane knowledge and moral weight. The findings relevant to the question of professionalism are presented in the next section. Following the findings, the implications for chaplaincy provision are explored.

## 2 Three Models: a Broad Description

First, I turn to the broad nature of the models discussed. Most of the chaplaincy service directors were clergy, coming from a range of denominations. Two of the five directors were not clergy. One was an academic with a PhD from outside the health disciplines and the other had a clinical background (nursing). In all cases the hospital chaplaincy service was run by Christians.

The models of chaplaincy provision among the hospitals investigated can be divided into three broad categories. These are described below under the rubrics, professional, denominational and community models of chaplaincy provision.

Most state hospitals provided chaplaincy services using the professional model of chaplaincy provision.<sup>20</sup> This involved the hospital or a parent body of the hospital engaging chaplains as paid staff. There was a core group of staff chaplains, all of whom were Christians, plus others who might be called in as needed. Those on call included clergy from other faith communities. Depending on the hospital, there might be some lay involvement in visitation, though they were not termed chaplains. The laypersons offer practical support and perhaps some pastoral care.

Nearly all chaplains in the professional model were professional clergy. One chaplain and one director among the professional model were not professional clergy. Chaplains were expected to have a bachelor's degree or equivalent in

18 David Fagg, "Expressing Faith in the Secular Workplace: Australian Youth Workers," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

19 Andrew Sloane, "More than Technique: The Professions as Missional Vocation," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

20 The term "traditional" was used due to its prevalence in the hospital system. This can be observed both in the sample examined and in the literature. E.g., Mohrmann, a US academic, assumes that chaplains are clergy. Margaret E. Mohrmann, "Ethical Grounding for a Profession of Hospital Chaplaincy," *The Hastings Center Report* 6 (December 2008): 18.

ministry or theology. Most professional services also required that at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) was completed.<sup>21</sup>

Some hospitals in the professional model still used the historically common denominational quota system. This involved a tripartite allocation of Anglican, Catholic and Other Protestant Denominations (OPD), in the engaging of chaplains. (This pattern is also found in Australian military chaplaincy.) However, use of this pattern seems to be on the decline, with a number of services describing it as part of their historical, rather than current practice. It was more common in the sample to have an ecumenical approach, without denominational quotas.

The second model is termed the denominational model because the governance structure is located within a Christian denomination. While most chaplains in the denominational model were clergy, the director was not. A significant departure from the professional model was the intentional creation of entry pathways for those who were not clergy. More senior roles did require theological or ministry qualifications and experience. However, for entry roles, the personal qualities of the applicant were of primary importance. The director commented:

Pastoral associate, that group they didn't necessarily have to have any formal pastoral qualifications if they have done maybe pastoral ministry through parish or maybe something through schools. What I was looking for there were more attributes, personal attributes, and if they understood really what in their layman's terms were pastoral ministry. Because my aim was we brought them in and we would put them into a training program. So [that] gave us an opportunity to be able to train them. (Chaplaincy Director, Denominational Model)

Once selected, applicants were encouraged to earn formal qualifications if they did not have them. Established courses were available through an arrangement with a local university. However, it was not required that chaplains proceed to the process of formal ordination with their own denomination.<sup>22</sup> CPE is no

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21 Clinical Pastoral Education is a program to train people in pastoral care. The program is designed particularly for care of people in crisis in clinical environments. In Australia they are offered through hospital-based structures (e.g., Royal Perth Hospital, WA, and Royal Melbourne Hospital, Vic) and through educational institutions such as the University of Divinity, Melbourne, and Sydney College of Divinity.

22 Ordination is used in this paper as an umbrella term to cover all types of formal recognition by a denomination of their clergy.

longer required for chaplains in this model, though it may be part of the training. Multiple units of CPE were specifically noted as not particularly beneficial.

The third model is termed the community model, because the governance structure arises from the local Christian community. In this model, chaplains are not employees of the hospital or its parent group. The service is provided to the hospital by the local Christian minister's association. (It is unclear whether Swift's description of chaplaincy arranged 'via a service level agreement with a faith community' in the UK is a similar model).<sup>23</sup> This association is ecumenical, drawing clergy from a broad range of denominations in the local government region surrounding the hospital. Initially the service was provided to the hospital without any additional formal governance structures, reflecting its organic, relational beginnings. More recently, an incorporated body was formed under the governance of the minister's association to provide the service. This incorporated body is responsible for selecting and engaging the chaplains.

The community model engages a mix of lay and clergy chaplains. As in the denominational model, who the person is doing the ministry rather than their qualifications is paramount. A personal call to the ministry is important. So too is a recognition of being gifted in the area of pastoral care. As the service director said:

What we continue to do is to get people with the right motivations. You're not going to probably just get people who went and did a BA of theology at [university] who can't get a job as a minister somewhere. Tried becoming a school chaplain. Couldn't get there. And they come in because it's a career path. Because while some of those people might be great chaplains, some will just be doing it because it's a job. And I think ministry at its core is better when it's calling rather than a job. So that's a bit of our ethos in there. (Chaplaincy Director Hospital A)

As key leaders involved in the administration of this model are Pentecostal, this was expressed in terms of a *charismata*, as described in 1 Corinthians 12–14, Romans 12 or Ephesians 4. While the same may be said of clergy in other denominations, here there was no assumption that such persons are or should be clergy. As there are no empirical measures for the *charismata*, the measure used was a recognition of that gift by the body of Christ, normally the applicant's home church. The call may be to chaplaincy in general, however, it also

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23 Chris Swift, "A State Health Service and Funded Religious Care," *Health Care Analysis* 21 (2013): 248–58.

may be to a particular area. One of the chaplains almost exclusively provides chaplaincy services to the mental health wards of the hospital. This is not due to any particular qualifications or background. In this case, the chaplain describes it as a particular ministry into which the Holy Spirit has directed him. While chaplains are encouraged to obtain formal qualifications in ministry or theology, they are not required, nor is CPE. The hospital has its own employment requirements which all appointees must meet. The hospital also has the final say on appointments.

The service itself is relatively new, arising from the voluntary chaplaincy work of one of the local clergy. Eventually this ministry was formalized with the hospital. First the unincorporated ministers' association had an arrangement with the local hospital to provide chaplaincy, with a small gratuity being provided to the chaplains. With a recognition of risk for the chaplains and the members of the ministers' association should misconduct or legal action occur, and with the hospital moving toward a tendering process for the service, the chaplaincy provision structures have been formalized into an incorporated body by the ministers' association.

None of the chaplains involved do this as their main source of income. A lower level of remuneration could be seen as a key factor here. This lower level of remuneration could be attributed to the increase in casualization and the number of people who were underemployed in Australia at the time.<sup>24</sup> However this is unlikely given the current arrangement evolved organically from the service's beginnings, rather than arising from a hospital management decision to reduce labour costs.

### 3 Democratization and Ministry of the Whole People of God

Are these changes in hospital chaplaincy provision an example of the move toward the democratization of ministry as suggested by Bosch? Is this an example of the deconstruction of hospital chaplaincy as an exclusive clergy profession? Or are there other explanations and nuances which should also be considered? First, these questions will be examined from the perspective of

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24 Parvinder Kler, Azhar Hussain Potia, and Sriram Shankar, "Underemployment in Australia: A Panel Investigation," *Applied Economics Letters* 25(1) (January 2, 2018): 24–28; Jinjing Li, Alan Duncan and Riyana Miranti, "Underemployment among Mature-Age Workers in Australia," *Economic Record* 91(295) (2015): 438–62; Anne Maxwell, "Australia's Casualisation Crisis," *Guardian* (Sydney), no. 1850 (November 28, 2018): 12.

each of the models discovered. Then, some of the broader themes from across the models will be considered.

The professional model provides little support for Bosch's prediction of an increase in lay involvement in ministry. This is particularly significant when taken with the fact that this model is represented all but two hospital groups in the research sample. While there have been important changes in the professional model, it still has a focus on professional clergy. Appointees were required to have a degree in ministry or theology and usually some CPE training. Respondents spoke of how things were done in the past as an 'old model', with specific reference to the past pattern of having chaplains according to denominational quotas. One site still uses this model. Another site previously had to have chaplains sourced from each of these groups on the team. They now describe the current team as 'ecumenical', having no specific denominational representation required. Another, newer hospital, began their service with an ecumenical approach. All the chaplains within this model required a degree-level qualification in ministry or theology and usually at least one unit of CPE.

The community chaplaincy service sources and appoints chaplains, including several lay chaplains. However, the service is not free to do as it pleases. It has the additional 'voice' of the state hospital's leadership and policies to contend with. Is it conceivable that the community chaplaincy service could appoint only lay chaplains? Yes, it is possible. However, is it likely and is it likely to continue long-term? This will be addressed more fully in the next section.

In the community model of provision, while some were clergy, a number were not. All in the community model contributed part-time. There was no formal difference between the lay and clergy chaplains in the service. Experience may be recognized, with those with the most extensive experience in ministry and/or chaplaincy placed in key organizational roles. However, there were no criteria which mandated that these roles should be held by professional clergy. A factor here seems to be that the leadership of the ministers' association came from church traditions other than the more sacerdotal denominations.

Another important factor seems to be the origins of the service. While non-sacerdotal denominations which emphasize the priesthood of all believers have traditionally been included in chaplaincy through the OPD category, this service also seems to be unique in that the leadership is dominated by people from non-sacerdotal churches. Interestingly, this is in spite of the fact that the original volunteer chaplain came from a sacerdotal denomination. So not only is there no 'baggage' in the system, with an historical assumption of professional clergy, there seems to be an assumption in the opposite direction, in

part due to the composition of the leadership. One could view the above as an expression of the forces Bosch mentions. The rise of non-conformist churches leading to their influencing chaplaincy provision by laypersons.

The hospital group within which the denominational service is based can make their own decisions about how to operate their chaplaincy service. While the hospital does receive funding from the Government for providing health services, what chaplaincy services they provide and the parameters around the employment and function of chaplains are governed by the hospital alone (through the director of chaplaincy services, who is accountable to the hospital's Board and ultimately to their denomination). It is conceivable that the chaplaincy director could make appointments whereby all chaplains are laypersons. The likelihood of this occurring or continuing if it did occur will be discussed below. The key factor influencing the appointment of a fully lay chaplaincy would be the efficacy of the service. Some other factors, such as risk mitigation might have an influence. However, policies from without the denominational model would have much less impact than services within state owned and funded hospitals.

Does the denominational model provide evidence which supports Bosch's contention? The denominational model has undergone significant change and looks quite different now than when compared with its earlier expression. The two key changes in recent years are tighter integration into the clinical space and changes to the appointment of chaplains (described above). As a clinician, the director was clear about the positive contribution which chaplaincy can make toward patient health outcomes. The changes aimed to move chaplaincy from the 'periphery' to a central role in clinical care. In this, the impact of the director's clinical experience and perspective was plain.

Concerning the question of chaplains as clergy, as mentioned previously, the director of the denominational model is both a layperson and a clinician (nurse) by profession. While not investigated directly, it seems plausible that the director's lay role has also shaped the approach to the appointment of chaplains. Within the denominational model there are still marks of the clergy-laity divide in the language used during the interview. It is noteworthy, first that the majority of pastoral staff are laypersons from a diverse denominational background and second that the service itself has been rebranded from chaplaincy to pastoral services to 'broaden' the service, away from the professional model. It could be that the occasional clergy-laity language used here reflected the sacerdotal norms of the director's faith tradition, rather than the practical operation of the service.

Removing a requirement that applicants be trained in CPE was described by the Chaplaincy Director of Hospital C as being 'about making the door a

bit more open and seeing what presents itself'. This encourages people who are not clergy to think about chaplaincy as a career pathway. Those for whom CPE could be seen as a barrier or disincentive included applicants from backgrounds such as counselling, psychology and philosophy. Individuals from these professions were described as already having an appropriate level of self-awareness and skills in self-reflection. The focus on attributes was reiterated here. It is important to note that this hospital did provide CPE themselves at one point but now no longer did. Therefore, this was not simply a critique of outside programs.

One could interpret this as an example of the move toward increased lay involvement, a decrease in professionalisation. However, the specific context again becomes important. Rather than the result of broad theological and missiological forces, I contend that the clinical background of and focus on clinical outcomes by the director is the key factor here. This is difficult to establish conclusively from the data gathered. However, it will be interesting to see the impact if a future director of the denominational model is appointed from within the clergy. If such an appointment leads to an increase in professionalisation of chaplains in that model, then one could conclude with some confidence that the director, rather than wider forces or trends is the major influence.

Having considered the question from the perspective of each of the models discovered, we now turn to some of the common issues arising from the data. One common thread which arose in the research was that the personal attributes of the chaplains appointed, rather than their professional qualifications was most important. While it was noted in the professional model of provision, they were more strongly emphasized in the denominational and community models. Certainly, the key role of the chaplain's personal formation cannot be overstated.<sup>25</sup> A possibly contributing factor here is the experience noted both among the professional model and in the denominational model in the past, of having chaplains who were not effective. (Given its newness, it is unsurprising this was not noted in the community model.) The picture was painted of chaplains who, though professional clergy, at best, were not contributing well to patient outcomes, or who, at worst, caused conflict or discomfort.

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25 Margery Collin and Jacki Thomas, "Our Unique Role," in *Chaplaincy in Hospice and Palliative Care*, edited by Karen Murphy and Bob Whorton (London, UK: Jessica Kingsley, 2017), 99–101, 103.



Might one see this as a move toward appointing lay chaplains, a decreasing emphasis on the clergy? <sup>26</sup> One might ask if the changes seen in the denominational and community models still see hospital chaplaincy as a profession?

Rather than a move away from clergy toward the laity, what might be being identified here is a gap in clergy formation. In his chapter, Sloane describes a profession as having technical skills, arcane knowledge and moral weight. Perhaps part of what is occurring in the chaplaincy domain is what has been observed elsewhere in the workforce. Intellectual knowledge and skills, while valued, are no longer the key criterion for employment. Soft skills, have arisen as core competencies, including in the knowledge workplace.<sup>27</sup> One might suggest that soft skills are even more important in a role where so much concerns working with people: patients, the clinical team and other hospital staff. The literature calls for these skills among medical appointees, and healthcare managers.<sup>28</sup> Other studies note their role in dealing with hospital workplace stress.<sup>29</sup> One could argue that the case for soft skills for chaplains is stronger, as their role is even more closely linked with the emotional state of patients and staff.<sup>30</sup>

Martin's findings that professionals found character and relational elements to be key in workplace ministry echo the emphases of the denominational and community models of chaplaincy.<sup>31</sup> However, the addition of biblical

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26 Sloane, "More than Technique".

27 The literature is extensive in this space. Two studies will be cited here as examples, the first focussing on teachers, the second on IT workers. Minwei Li et al., "A Multilevel Model of Teachers' Job Performance: Understanding the Effects of Trait Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Trust | Psychology," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (November 30, 2018): 2420; and IT workers: Priyam Dhani and Tanu Sharma, "Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Job Performance of IT Employees: A Gender Study," *Procedia Computer Science*, 5th International Conference on Information Technology and Quantitative Management, ITQM 122 (January 1, 2017): 180–85.

28 Melanie Raffoul, Gillian Bartlett-Esquillant, and Robert L. Jr Phillips, "Recruiting and Training a Health Professions Workforce to Meet the Needs of Tomorrow's Health Care System," *Academic Medicine* 94(5) (May 2019): 651–55; Adebukola Esther Oyewunmi, "Normalizing Difference: Emotional Intelligence and Diversity Management Competence in Healthcare Managers," *Intangible Capital* 14(3) (2018): 429–44.

29 Eric Badu et al., "Workplace Stress and Resilience in the Australian Nursing Workforce: A Comprehensive Integrative Review," *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 29(1) (2020): 5–34.

30 Calls for the role of emotional intelligence in medicine, for example, have been made for many years. See, for example, Parker J. Palmer, "A New Professional: The Aims of Education Revisited," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 39(6) (2007): 6–12.

31 Kara Martin, "Formed to Be on a Mission for God in the Workplace: Doctors and Teachers' Perspectives," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*,

knowledge as a core item of knowledge required by these professionals in their workplace should hold up an important mirror to the two chaplaincy models where formal qualifications are deemed less important. If Christians whose workplace role is not explicitly faith-based emphasize the need for a solid intellectual foundation, one should not neglect this element for hospital chaplains, whose role is explicitly faith oriented.

Perhaps the original model of appointment of chaplains focused (solely or too much) on intellectual (cognitive) intelligence. The need to expand the definition of a chaplain's arcane knowledge and technical skills to include elements of multiple intelligence (MI) might be what is being realized here.<sup>32</sup> The knowledge and skills of 'correct' theology and strong skills in biblical exegesis need the addition of relational skills, and emotional self-management (both core emotional intelligence skills). This could be thought of as expanding what one considers to be key knowledge and skills for chaplains—or, dare I say it, for any ministry professional.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that this increased emphasis on soft skills was found across the models, along with the understanding that these soft skills were not seen as incompatible with professional ministry, suggests that this is not a clear example of Bosch's democratisation. Rather, it seems more reasonable to conclude that this is a move similar to that seen in other professions such as medicine whereby soft skills are being seen as necessary inclusions in the profession's 'toolbox'. The greater emphasis in the denominational and community models could relate more to the contextual and governance factors mentioned above, rather than specifically relating to a democratisation of chaplaincy ministry itself.

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edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024). Included in this conceptualisation of character are the elements of spiritual disciplines, which are core to any truly Christian character. As Jesus notes in John 15, unless one abides in him, one can do nothing.

32 See, for example, K. Davis et al., "The Theory of Multiple Intelligences," in *Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence*, edited by R. J. Sternberg and S. B. Kaufman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 485–503. One of the key authors in the field is Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic, 2011); Sternberg is another key author. See, for example, Robert J. Sternberg, "Multiple Intelligences in the New Age of Thinking," in *Handbook of Intelligence*, edited by Sam Goldstein, Dana Princiotto, and Jack A. Naglieri (New York, NY: Springer, 2015), 229–41.

33 P. Salovey and J. D. Mayer, "Emotional Intelligence," *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9(3) (1990): 185–211; John D. Mayer, David R. Caruso, and Peter Salovey, "The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence: Principles and Updates," *Emotion Review* 8(4) (October 1, 2016): 290–300.

Given the ambiguity in the data above, can we observe in hospital chaplaincy the process of professionalization noted by Fagg? In the professional model the emphasis on a minimum theological qualification and CPE, plus formal job descriptions, stands in contrast with the emphasis on character and call in the denominational and community models. It is interesting that Fraser attributes the move toward professionalization in UK (and particularly Scotland) health services to chaplains no longer being employed by the Church, but by health services themselves.<sup>34</sup> In the sample examined for this paper, it was the two services who were run by church groups who had the least focus on chaplaincy as a clergy-focused profession. In the services which did seem to emphasize qualifications more, the chaplains and directors were employees of the state health service, through the hospitals. It seems that similar forces are at work in hospital chaplaincy at least among this sample in Australia. Here we see the move towards the laity within the church being resisted by the external force of professionalisation in this context.

Why is there a drive toward professionalisation? This drive could be described as being driven both positively and negatively. Positively, a well-trained professional will have the required knowledge and skills for the tasks they are called on to perform. In addition, having appropriately qualified and endorsed professionals is a way for organisations to mitigate risk. Risks could encompass poor practice due to ignorance, through to deliberate wrongdoing. However, as the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse<sup>35</sup> has amply illustrated, a professional clergy by itself cannot remove the risk of deliberate wrongdoing. Nevertheless, professional training in best practice does reduce the potential for poor practice. An example is CPE, which focuses on self-awareness and self-reflection, and reduces poor practice due to a lack of self-knowledge.

A key question, however, is whether the need for this sort of training requires clergy as chaplains? The data did not indicate that professional accreditation was a 'silver bullet'. It became apparent through interviews that some current and historical difficulties in the various services arose due to lack of self-awareness on the part of clergy. One of the services has changed its governance and operations due to the inadequacy of the service provided by clergy during an earlier period. Another service was addressing current difficulties

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34 Derek Fraser, "Charting the Journey Toward Healthcare Professionalisation in the UK," in *Chaplaincy and the Soul of Health and Social Care: Fostering Spiritual Wellbeing in Emerging Paradigms of Care*, edited by Ewan Kelly and John Swinton (London, UK: Jessica Kingsley, 2019), 116–31.

35 See <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>.

with a chaplain who was a long-time clergyperson. This should caution against a too-simplistic approach which equates professionalization with risk mitigation. The relationship is complex. However, on balance there seems to be a strong argument in favour of skill development for all practitioners. Even if it does not reduce poor practice, at the least it provides an enlarged 'tool-box' for practicing chaplains. There is no assumption, however, that chaplains must therefore be clergy. Does this lead to something not envisaged by Bosch, a professionally trained lay ministry? In some respects, how one answers this question depends on how one defines 'ministry'. If Christian ministry is an ordained office, then one would tend to equate any professional ministry as clerical. However, if one interprets ministry as a function, then one could be engaged in a profession whose role is to provide Christian ministry without needing to be a clergyperson.

The community model's focus on the use of people with spiritual gifts which have been discerned by the local church could be perceived as an example of the trend away from professionalisation of chaplaincy. Perhaps a spiritual, rather than an emotional intelligence, has come to the fore. If so, it is no surprise that one of the chaplains, who would be considered 'unqualified' according to professional standards, reported how they had been asked not only to be involved in clinical conversations within the hospital's mental ward, but to come and pray over a room by medical staff. It seems the hospital staff recognized a spiritual element to the chaplain, his role and the situation they were facing. Perhaps the arcane knowledge Sloane speaks of as the mark of a profession should include this element of spiritual intelligence for chaplains too. This seems a clearer example of what Bosch was envisaging, with the role of the laity being determined by the theological principle of divine gifting. The greater involvement of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the leadership of the community model will have created an environment whereby such lay ministry was not only possible, but expected, due to the theological presuppositions of these traditions. 'The thrust of much of the literature on spiritual gifts for ministry has been on equipping the laity for ministry.'<sup>36</sup>

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36 Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian, 1997), 202–3.

#### 4 Looking Forward

If we consider Adler and Katoneene's description of lay ministry as being the church in the world. If the community model and the changes in the denominational model are an expression of the expanding ministry of the laity, moving away from professional clergy, an important question to ask is whether it is a viable long-term alternative in the hospital chaplaincy context? A significant issue for the community model is that of remuneration. While some remuneration is received by these chaplains, it is not sufficient to earn a 'living wage'. One chaplain interviewed was considering whether to continue in the role, as they could not support a family on that income alone. A significant factor here is that the chaplain was from a younger age bracket and was considering how to earn enough to establish a family and to purchase a house. The chaplaincy role was considered to be a ministry, but the chaplain's response was informed by a world view where ministry was to be the primary source of income; that is, a profession.

If Bosch's envisaged democratisation of ministry is to proceed along lines similar to the community model, a bi-vocational perspective of ministry might be useful. Bi-vocational ministry is on the increase.<sup>37</sup> Samushonga observes a shift in the definition of bi-vocational ministry away from a primary focus on clergy to the inclusion of the laity. This move away from a focus on clergy bi-vocational ministry interprets 'ministry' in a wider sense. However, Samushonga also notes that in mainline and other denominations (including among Pentecostals), this is not always the case. As he observes, the paradigm whereby the clergy are a profession whose devotion was to that office, has an impact on how one contemplates or lives bi-vocational ministry.

The challenges noted above must be allowed for if one chooses to adopt the community model of chaplaincy. This is not an issue for healthcare providers. It is an issue for the Church. An exclusive focus on, or strong valuing of,

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37 Hartness M. Samushonga, "A Theological Reflection of Bivocational Pastoral Ministry: A Personal Reflective Account of a Decade of Bivocational Ministry Practice Experience," *Practical Theology* 12(1) (January 11, 2019): 66–80; Ed Stetzer, "Bivocational Ministry as an Evangelism Opportunity," *The Exchange* (October 15, 2017), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/september/bivocational-ministry-as-evangelism-opportunity.html>; Karl Vaters, "The New Normal: 9 Realities and Trends In Bivocational Ministry," *Pivot* (December 12, 2017), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/december/new-normal-9-realities-trends-bivocational-ministry.html>. Both accessed 29 July 2022.

full-time, professional ministry can create barriers to lay ministry. This limits the pool of ‘ministers’ available for hospital chaplaincy. If one accepts ministry as a function of call and gift, independent of where one earns a majority of income, then community model chaplaincy becomes practicable. If one limits ministry to a professional office, then the community model will struggle for acceptance, and will also struggle to fill positions with gifted and committed chaplains. An encouraging observation which Samushonga makes is that the rise in bi-vocational ministry is not simply as a method of supplementing income, but as a deliberate choice.<sup>38</sup> The abovementioned chaplain who was considering leaving the community model might have made a different choice if a less clergy-focused understanding of ministry was part of his reflection and decision-making processes. Caperon’s discussion of worker-priest ministry may be helpful here.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps some of the challenges to this world view in this volume might also provide an alternative perspective. Moon highlights of the church-community and clergy-laity gap and the potential for shared entrepreneurial ministry in the community. Eichorn’s describes lay persons as the key providers of urban street chaplaincy. Bottomley notes the dualism that separates clergy from the community. All challenge a simplistic equating of ministry with clergy being a full-time professional church worker.<sup>40</sup>

Another factor impacting whether a lay-based hospital chaplaincy service will continue into the future is the pressures brought to bear by its wider cultural and specific hospital contexts. In my own experience within the hospital system, I have seen the move to higher levels of qualifications. When beginning my nursing training, it was common for nurses to spend the majority of their training time in hospitals, with some time spent at the nursing school for classes. Nurses in this system graduated with a diploma. Now the current minimum qualification is a degree in nursing with training based in universities with some hospital placements as part of the degree program. This is not an isolated example. Teaching has similarly moved from the common qualification being a Diploma of Education to a master’s degree. The move toward professional frameworks and qualification standards in youth ministry noted

38 Samushonga, “A Theological Reflection of Bivocational Pastoral Ministry,” 75.

39 Caperon, “Chaplaincy and Traditional Church Structures,” 137–39.

40 W. Jay Moon, “Igniting Mission in the Marketplace: Imagining Clergy and Laity at Work Together”; Garth Eichhorn, “Australians at Play: Entertainment Precincts as a context for Mission”; John Bottomley, “Liberation and Idolatry at Work: God’s Judgement and Mercy in Covenant Faithfulness”, in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

by Fagg could be seen as a parallel in another ministry context.<sup>41</sup> In the context of hospital chaplaincy, I contend that Bosch's idealism founder on the reality of ministry within a highly regulated, highly professional chaplaincy context. One could easily imagine the community chaplaincy model hospital leadership requiring minimal qualifications for chaplains at some point. The fact that other hospitals required a minimum degree-level qualification for chaplains is a contextual pressure which could lead to the imposition of minimum standards for chaplains within the community chaplaincy model. Another contextual pressure is that minimum qualifications can be seen as part of risk mitigation. If some adverse event or misconduct occurs by chaplains in the community model, I would not be surprised if the question of minimum standards, and the role of professionals versus laity is raised.

Further research is needed. A longitudinal study would clarify the benefits and challenges of trajectories and changes. Research is also needed to investigate whether similar trends and issues can be found in other areas of chaplaincy, such as school and military chaplaincy. In addition, this study was in a specific culture and geography. Comparative investigation in other regions or cultures would assist in determining if these models are unique to the sample investigated or are representative of wider changes in chaplaincy mirroring a wider democratization of ministry.

## 5 Conclusions

Overall, there seem to have been significant shifts in chaplaincy provision in the hospitals researched in this project. The assumption of professional clergy appointed along denominational lines no longer holds absolutely. The denominational and community chaplaincy models demonstrate that the historical, professional model is not the only possible approach. Indeed, from feedback obtained by the directors of these models, outcomes may be improved if one considers other options. One might also consider that these models have revised the definition of ministry to a function, rather than a qualification (ordination). A ministry professional can be a clergyperson but may also be a layperson. Thus, they provide some support for Bosch's prediction of the expanding role of the laity in ministry.

However, at the same time, Bosch's perspective has been demonstrated to be idealistic, failing to allow for the role of context in shaping attitudes to

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41 Fagg, "Expressing Faith in the Secular Workplace".



and expressions of ministry. One has to acknowledge the significant role governance structures and the background of those in leadership plays in their approach to the recruitment of hospital chaplains.

One should also acknowledge the data from all models indicated the changing set of skills and knowledge are being required by ministry professionals. One needs to expand the measure of professionalism to include emotional and spiritual intelligence, rather than the more traditional focus on biblical and theological orthodoxy.

The case studies above also demonstrate that a professional chaplaincy service can be operated without being limited to the clergy providing a service. Rather, they show that allowing a wider range of the people of God mediate the presence of God can be a basis for a chaplaincy service in hospitals.

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# Australians at Play: Entertainment Precincts as a Context for Mission

*Garth Eichhorn*

## Abstract

Being missional in an urban post-Christendom environment is a growing challenge. A dominant secular culture is more frequently treating traditional forms of Christian mission with a measure of indifference. Using as a starting point David Bosch's theology on the rise of the secular society there is wisdom in constructing a relevant mission with the involvement of non-professional Christians in ministry. This case study looks at the relationship between work and play by non-professional street chaplains giving voluntary and generous care in late-night entertainment precincts using Hendrik Kraemer's theology of the laity as key to mission in a democratic society. Play is part of the Australian lifestyle, most obvious in the central role partying, alcohol and drugs have in the nation. In this context the chaplains can bring many features of the parable of the Good Samaritan into their work on the streets. A training curriculum has been specifically developed to enable these voluntary non-professionals to develop a theology suitable for mission in a secular city. Their ministry has also led to the developing of new ways of relating and working with the city's main service providers. The acceptance and growing support of the secular authorities would suggest engaging voluntary, non-professional Christians in mission is effective.

## Keywords

Secularism – urban mission – street chaplains – power – play

## 1 Mission in the Secular City

My journey in urban mission began with a question: What might be the shape of Christian witness to this changing world? In exploring the change, I spent a decade of urban mission work in the city searching for answers with a view to a valid response. Street chaplaincy emerged out of that. Several sudden and

significant events unfolded which I saw as the strong response of a trinitarian God: The Father's guiding hand in establishing a unique mission, the Son's role in developing the direction of the ministry, and the remarkable events of the Spirit, around, with and within the chaplains. Moreover, a significant number of Christians came together to pursue street chaplaincy and become a true 'mission of the Trinity'.<sup>1</sup> The fruitfulness of the ministry remains a confirmation to my faith that this is God-centred mission within a secular city. Moreover, a theology of street chaplaincy suggests fresh ways of understanding ordained ministry which functions to support the ministry of the whole people of God as the church in the world.

David Bosch, writing in the last decade of the twentieth century, wrote of Christianity as an 'historical faith'. In doing so he was essentially developing Hans Kung's view that the journey of the faithful over the centuries could be viewed as a series of "historico-theological subdivisions".<sup>2</sup> He identified six such divisions evolving since the first one (primitive Christianity). Bosch then suggested an emerging ecumenical or postmodern paradigm. This chapter reflects on the shape of this emerging in two broad ways. One way is in dialogue with the work of David Fagg who writes elsewhere in this book of workplaces as deeply secularized at a time when Christianity's cultural power has radically diminished.<sup>3</sup> A second way is exploring a secular society from the perspective of Christians in mission in entertainment precincts. This becomes a reflection on mission to the world of life outside of paid employment.

The purpose of the exploration will be tied to a reflection of my own journey as a missionary to the urban places of a city. To achieve this some thought will be given to several key issues around mission and society. The first of these issues will address the nature of the culture of the city as a secular place. This will be followed by consideration of the people of God as God's servants in the secular city context with reflection on Kraemer's view of God's people as servant people in the world. The chapter will conclude around issues relating to mission in a secular city.

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- 1 Darren Cronshaw, "Missio Dei is Mission Trinitas: Sharing the Whole Life of God, Father, Son and Spirit," *Mission Studies* 37(1) (March 2020): 119.
  - 2 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 187–189.
  - 3 David Fagg, "Expressing Faith in the Secular Workplace: Australian Youth Workers," in *Refashioning Work: Theological and Missiological Perspectives for a Disrupted Age*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

## 2 Defining Street Chaplains as Missionaries

The term ‘street chaplaincy’ has its roots with Bosch’s final paradigm in which he considers the emerging shape of the mission of the gospel. In “Mission as Ministry of the Whole People of God” Bosch described a “movement away from ministry as a monopoly of ordained men to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God”.<sup>4</sup> Kraemer before him had embraced a similar theology of the laity which he perceived as one of the outcomes of the rise of democracy in Western culture. “All members” he said, “of the *ekklesia* have in principle the same calling, responsibility and dignity, (and) have their part in the apostolic and ministerial nature and calling of the church”.<sup>5</sup> One of the outstanding outcomes of street chaplaincy has been the attraction of large numbers of Christians from the mainline churches into this ministry.

The term ‘street chaplain’ is used because this is a case study of those in mission who volunteer as non-professional people (as distinct from professional clergy) for the mission of the gospel. In this sense street chaplaincy in Western Australia finds a common voice with similar ministries across the world. Les Isaac, speaking of the value of the work of the English ‘Street Pastors’, captures the mood well when he says, “many Christians have, for a long time, been living with the belief that they must be able to do something about the problems they see in their communities”.<sup>6</sup> Street chaplaincy is one response by God’s people to missional work in the secular city.

Although street chaplains are mostly laypeople, they function in professional ways and in pastoral and sometimes evangelistic or apostolic functions that parallel ordained ministry, albeit with a focus beyond the walls of the church. It is a case study in non-ecclesiocentric and non-clergy-centric ministry. This is what Alan Roxburgh says is essential in being *missional* – joining with what God is doing in our neighbourhoods rather than anxiously striving to maintain and control the church establishment.<sup>7</sup> Like the community hospital chaplains that Pegram investigates,<sup>8</sup> and the professional youth workers that

4 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

5 Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (London, GB: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 160.

6 Les Isaac, *Street Pastors* (Eastbourne, UK: David C Cook, 2009), 21.

7 Alan Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking the Church, Changing the World* (New York: Church, 2015); *Joining God in the Great Unraveling: Where are we & what I’ve learned* (Eugene, OR: 2021), 8–16.

8 Nigel Pegram, “Professionals in Hospital Chaplaincy Provision,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

Fagg describes,<sup>9</sup> street chaplains are representing the ‘church in the world’. To borrow Fagg’s language that Pegram also used, street chaplaincy is ministry in a secular context, rather than work by Christians in a secular workplace. Street chaplaincy may involve numbers of laypeople, but they are functioning with a professional ministry model not unlike ordained ministers. Moreover, street chaplaincy models new directions of ministry that are fruitful for ordained ministry, and the ministry of the whole people of God, to learn from – and not just in the world of work but of recreation and entertainment. The ministry began in Northbridge, Perth’s premium entertainment precinct, and now ranges across thirteen centres in Western Australia from Kununurra in the Kimberley to Albany on the south coast. It began in 2007 using elements of the Good Samaritan parable as a model for ministry. Today there are between 200–250 trained missionaries, all of whom are volunteers.

The ministry works the late-night hours on weekends when many converge on the entertainment precincts. People will party until the early hours of the morning mostly consuming alcohol as the drug of preference. This leads some into conflict and sickness. The police see the chaplains as a valuable resource for the care of people and often ‘hand-over’ to the chaplains a struggling individual who needs time to recover. The chaplains work in teams with their accredited First Aid skills providing care in word and deed for the needy. Their collaborative and holistic witness speaks into the lives of key service providers such as the police, as well as the homeless, Indigenous peoples and many young adults.

Like all mission street chaplaincy carries a human cost, but in all the suffering and weariness of the late-night rosters there are many acts of undeniable grace and significant outcomes that encourage those involved. One outcome is the warm acceptance of the public and of government service providers many of whom have reframed their understanding of the gospel.

### 3 Secularity in Western Culture

So, how does a mission-focused person, like a street chaplain, understand secular culture? In this chapter consideration is given to the significant importance of Christians in their role in mission. The focus will not be so much about flourishing in the city as God’s people.<sup>10</sup> Rather, reflection will take place around the

9 Fagg, “Australian Youth Workers”.

10 “Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29.7, NIV).

relevance of God's people engaged in urban mission within the context of the power exerted by a secular culture.

The British National Secular Society is at pains to explain secularism as essentially freedom from the influence of religion.<sup>11</sup> A more nuanced view of the influence of secularism as a moral and social force in Western culture is notably absent. My own opinion is that the moral power of secularism today should be addressed by Christians as a key factor to understanding the city. It is the reason why Christians should understand and reshape their theology and practice to win the hearts of people to the gospel. On the premise that every culture is a constantly shaping and re-shaping environment, the current developed stage of Western culture has made a deep cut in confidence towards the Church. A generation has arisen with little regard for a transcendent God. Many churches are gutted, with the evidence confirmed by Australian national statistics.<sup>12</sup>

Fruitful urban mission is more likely to emerge if secularism is understood in relation to the church and its mission. Over recent times, the Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor's epic work, *A Secular Age* has provided a good resource.

This volume chose Bosch as its main conversation partner in exploring the nature of transforming work in the context of transforming mission; that is how a renewed understanding of mission can reshape a renewed understanding of work that cooperates with *mission Dei*. Bosch is enormously helpful for grasping the paradigm shifts of mission that are emerging.<sup>13</sup> Taylor is equally or more significant for grasping the tidal shifts of our global context in terms of secularism and how that influences work and mission. Further research applying Taylor's body of work to transforming work as mission conversation is needed.

Taylor explores three views of the secular: firstly, public spaces emptied of God, then activities with no reference to God and finally a society in which faith, "even for the staunchest believer is one human possibility among others."<sup>14</sup> Taylor in this respect was building on Kraemer's previous theology (of the

11 National Secular Society three principles: Separation from religious institutions; Freedom to practice faith without harming others; Equality so that religious belief or lack of them does not put any at an advantage or disadvantage. "National Secular Society: Challenging Religious Privilege. <https://www.secularism.org.uk/>. Accessed 27 January 2021.

12 McCrindle, "Faith and Belief in Australia: A National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends," (Sydney: McCrindle Research, 2017). <https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/publications/reports-and-summaries/faith-and-belief-in-australia-report/>. Accessed 26 January 2021.

13 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 189–194 and following.

14 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.



laity). Kraemer foresaw the coming “smallness of the Church’s significance in the welter of dominant powers and tendencies which govern men’s lives.” He could see a ‘victorious secularism’, “which would domesticate the church”<sup>15</sup> as a reduced power capable of doing little more than the care of its own.

Though quite dense in its style, Taylor’s philosophy of our age is complemented by a companion volume by James Smith. In articulating Taylor’s third sense of the secular, Smith discerned secularism as “a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace”.<sup>16</sup>

Taylor thoughtfully contrasts the age-long Christendom culture of the West with the current secular age and suggests the secular age is better. “In the old Christendom, everyone was a Christian and hardly anyone thought twice about it”.<sup>17</sup> By contrast in the current age, everyone becomes a ‘wayfarer in the desert’, where there is little to no conversation around what we believe, but more about what is believable. A Christendom culture with its focus on beliefs drew on rational resources of the Scriptures. However, in a secular culture, where, as Taylor says, the tension is primarily on what is believable, missional practice needs to find new roles. Street chaplains for instance, refrain from engaging verbally about the Christian faith and focus instead on a ‘Good Samaritan’ model of ministry. In doing so, they seek to exhibit that in-your-face ‘believable’ dimension of the gospel.

Drawing on these themes of Kraemer and Taylor two concerns have emerged for street chaplain ministry. The first is the missional role of chaplains (and all Christians) in this developed secular culture. As part of the culture, they too live in a “cross-pressured” environment working personally with their own tension between the eternal call of the gospel, and the powerful, ever-present world of science and consumption.<sup>18</sup> The second issue is the obvious need for a training model which brings understanding and experience to those in chaplaincy ministry that work within the power structures of the secular city. These two issues are developed in the four-fold processes explored in this chapter.

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15 Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 186.

16 James K A Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 22.

17 Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 12.

18 Taylor’s idea of “cross-pressure” involves the awareness by individuals that no matter what spiritual option they happen to identify with, they have a heightened sense of awareness of alternatives to their own position. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 549.

Such discernment of a theology and practice is valuable, but the question should then be asked, how does the secular city affect, and challenge the chaplain?

#### 4 The Nature of the Secular City

Over recent years there has been considerable debate around a definition of what defines secular cities. Cities differ enormously in shape and size making a definition quite difficult.<sup>19</sup> It is my conviction that it is the pervasive influencing of secular culture which strongly shapes an understanding of the city.

Most cities are constituted around certain demographical features. There are urban centres where commerce, government and entertainment dominate. Then there are often dormitory areas where people prefer to live, enjoy recreation, and educate their children. For the sake of clarity, I identify urban centres as distinctive from dormitory areas by labelling the latter as 'suburban'.

Four social elements in relation to *missio Dei* found in every secular city will be considered in this case study. The four elements together have given the street chaplain significant embedment in the social fabric of the secular city, as illustrated in Figure 17.1.

#### 5 The First Element: a Suburban Conduit to Urban Involvement

Most Christians live in the city's 'suburban' space and attend local churches that have their own purpose-built facilities. Suburban churches use their spaces mostly for worship and as Christian educational centres for their children and for their own social reasons. Suburban churches also carry out mission as a traditional part of their annual program. On the one hand they focus on practical local compassionate work such as meals for the homeless and on the other hand they maintain an overseas mission commitment for helping people in poorer countries. The local work is usually compassionate by nature as distinct to evangelistic, whereas the overseas ministries embrace a wider and more holistic missional vision. Both these practical ministries can be contained within a religious frame. Suburban Christians can gain much for the

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19 Harvey Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001). The work of these two authors captures well the several difficulties.

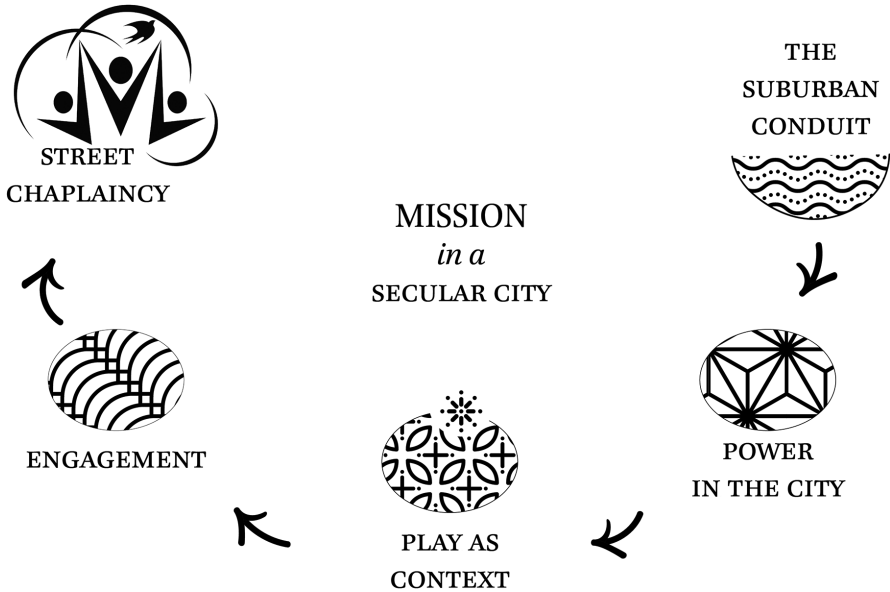


FIGURE 17.1 Street chaplaincy as mission in a secular city

encouragement of their faith when they engage with ministries “in which the cultural gap between churchgoers and non-churchgoers might be bridged”.<sup>20</sup>

### 5.1 *The Unique Role of Suburban Christians*

Most Christians experience the impact of secularism through their daily exposure in the three social areas of employment, education, and recreation. In these social systems the old Christendom culture has almost disappeared.

Middle-aged Christian parents sitting in church pews feel the winds of change in culture. It is when a mission is proposed that understands and embraces the secular culture that they begin showing significant curiosity, for two good reasons. Firstly, they want to know how to live and work as Christians in a secular society. They want to be ‘church in the world’. Then secondly, many who are committed to *missio Dei* are looking for ministry which adequately engages their discipleship in Christ with secular culture. As two practical theologians put it: “It is commonly accepted that modern society, and especially urban society, cannot be conquered by the institutional church from the outside, but needs to be taken over from within through the witness of believers

<sup>20</sup> Victoria Slater, *Chaplaincy Ministry and the Mission of the Church* (London: SCM, 2015), 64.

living and working in towns and cities and intimately acquainted with their communities”.<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising then to find many committed Christians deliberately seeking out and engaging with street chaplaincy. It is indicative of the need to move on from ministry techniques and objectification of people to focus instead on relationality. Hence what Roxburgh argues is critical that mission is being with people rather than doing things for them:

Even as churches and their professional leaders have lost their ability to represent God within buildings and established roles, ordinary people have been rediscovering the sacred in the rhythms and routines of their neighbourhoods.... [D]egreed and professional leaders, the technocratic elites of the clergy industry, are being misdirected from the ferment happening on the ground.... God's ordinary people know business as usual is over.<sup>22</sup>

So, the suburban Christian comes to mission in the secular city curious for orientation and seeking formation for ministry. This led to leaders of street chaplaincy in Perth, Western Australia becoming acutely aware of the need to address a curriculum for a secularist urban situation. It became quite a learning curve stretching over a few years (and is ongoing) before confidence emerged around a worthy curriculum. It is encouraging that others are recognizing the same challenge. Karina Kreminski suggests: “For all the writing and talk around missional theology these days, there needs to be a more concentrated effort to focus on what it means to be formed and shaped into missional people”.<sup>23</sup> I affirm her words and add that this will not be successful unless current curricula in Christian learning institutions are re-shaped around a relevant theology of the secular urban context.<sup>24</sup>

## 5.2 *Developing Confidence for Mission in a Public Place*

In making the point that suburban Christians are turning towards a mission that understands secular society, their enthusiasm will need to be moderated with a special sort of training that gives them both confidence and understanding. Taking (mostly) middle-class suburban Christians and dropping them into

21 Louis Heyns and Hendrick Pieterse, *A Primer in Practical Theology* (Pretoria, SA: Gnosis, 1986), 2.

22 Roxburgh, *Joining God in the Great Unraveling*, 16, 19, 20.

23 Karina Kreminski, *Urban Spirituality: Embodying God's Mission in the Neighborhood* (Skyforest CA: Urban Loft, 2018), 31.

24 An adequate curriculum will cover a theology that addresses secular/Christian distinctives and evangelism as care; cultural and missional essentials such as accredited First Aid skills, and public licenses.

public ministry is fraught with risk unless some confidence has grown in being competent socially and Christianly in a secular environment.

Social competency in mission can take two forms. At the start of the training the volunteers will gain from a conversation (as a group) with mature urban missionaries. In this context they hear how others have experienced the socially distinctive moments and what they did to cope. Lingering fears will also surface, and they will be relieved to discover that those fears are common to all who begin the urban mission journey in a secular city. The stories told will show ways of dealing with the fears and provide a doorway to a more confident faith. This is an important factor in developing a theology around secularism.

Those in training will also gain from a probationary period in which they can test their capacity (and theology) for public ministry. Street chaplaincy differs culturally and practically from church ministries within or around a church building. Social competency is critical on urban streets. With a pervasive secular culture, an accreditation process involving a mentored probationary period will be an essential requirement for new volunteers.

In committing to street chaplaincy training, a contextualizing of faith in Christ and the secular society becomes clearer. The training draws on the incarnational nature of the gospel demonstrated by the gracious activities of the chaplains on urban streets.

### 5.3 *A Unifying Missional Framework*

Mission in a secular environment needs a healthy theology. The public place is an 'in-your-face' environment where theology is constantly being socially aired and tested. At any point in time, secularists are contesting Christian belief. Sensitization around 'street' questions currently on the minds of secularists is a priority in the training and in ongoing reflection sessions.

Another issue for street chaplains working together across denomination lines revolves around their own beliefs. They can contribute poorly to the differences by being quite polarized around social ethics, with some (from experience) more polarized than others. Street chaplain ministry accepts Christians for training from various denominations. Differences around theology and practice come up often. Preparation of team ministry both in the training sessions and by experience, needs to cope relationally with distinctive beliefs over which members may differ. Disciples working as a team should do so without polarizing emotionally between themselves! Any polarization would not be quite what our Lord intended.<sup>25</sup> Non-Christians are deeply affected by

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25 "This is my command: Love each other" (John 15.17, NIV) as also "Whoever hates his brother is still in the darkness" (1 John 1.11, NIV).

disagreements between people of the faith. Any disunity amongst Christians will only entrench social criticism.

#### 5.4 *Issues for Christians in Teams*

The issue of gender equality is a core feature of the current secular conversation. Street chaplains have gained quiet respect by putting a priority on both working as a team and with male and female chaplains embedded in teams. With such a worldwide reaction to sexual abuse by a few Christian workers, teams that include women as well as men provide wise options for ministry especially to single young women in need. Team ministry moderates the unease of non-Christians. A good, warm, loving and gender-balanced team speaks with confidence in the secular social context. Hence gender equality is an important dimension of ministry for the whole people of God.

The complexity of the social life in the city demands the mission also take the compatibility of gifting into consideration placing certain demands on the design of missional teams. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is helpful. Taylor expressed it in this way: "If the Samaritan had followed the demands of sacred social boundaries, he would never have stopped to help the wounded Jew".<sup>26</sup> The Parable gave the chaplains the freedom to serve voluntarily on busy streets late at night offering spontaneous acts of kindness.

With this freedom in mind the chaplains have used a basic personality assessment drawn from group theory. This has proved quite successful in composing teams by using five animal types to discern distinctive personality types: the shark, owl, fox, turtle, and teddy bear.<sup>27</sup> The point is - balance the ministry with compatible, not competing personalities that suit spontaneous care opportunities.

## 6 The Second Element: How Power Works in a Secular City

Social power and conversations about spiritual power have been part of the missional gospel conversation since the days of the New Testament.<sup>28</sup> A robust debate continues into our time. In a secular city the powers provide

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 158

<sup>27</sup> David Johnson and Frank Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group skills* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 72–274. For example: "Turtles withdraw into their shells to avoid conflicts ... Sharks try to overpower opponents by forcing them to accept their solution to the conflict."

<sup>28</sup> The fourth gospel speaks of the ultimate evil power as 'the ruler of this world'. The Pauline letters comment often on 'principalities and powers'.

the boundaries for social activity. Flett, in describing city powers, captures the role they play well when he describes them as “the structures of the contingent world and a consequence of God’s creative ordering of it.”<sup>29</sup> Here, I focus solely on the way the street chaplain experiences the secular use of power in the urban space. This is achieved by reviewing voluntary service in a Christian context, and the way this type of serving interacts with secular urban powers.

On launching a mission project in a secular city, two powers will sit uncomfortably together. The power expressed through Christians is a servant ministry around generous love.<sup>30</sup> The secular city uses power quite differently. While love and voluntary service are strongly held by Christians, it contrasts with secular society where power is expressed by laws working through committees and agencies.<sup>31</sup> The Western democratic system is shaped by its executive citizens delegating power to committees. It does not matter if the committee is the State or Federal Government, the Police Department, or the local High School. Each of these entities has certain powers and will delegate to committees or persons the power to act for the purpose of the entity. Of course, the churches are part of a city, as Figure 17.2 illustrates, and churches develop a ‘business model’ by way of response to be seen as belonging to the city. Therein lies a temptation for the churches. Churches can fall into the habit of using a business model rather than a missional model without taking into consideration how the New Testament carefully crafts the way power works. Churches need to provide courses on the influence of power in the urban space, then follow this with training which addresses “those religious actions that communicate with others so as to make room for God in this world.”<sup>32</sup>

As Figure 2 illustrates, it is important that Christians preparing to work in an urban environment have a thorough understanding of these two distinctively different power systems: the Christian and the secular.

29 Eric Flett, *Persons, Powers, and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture* (Pickwick, OR: Eugene, 2011), 78.

30 There are many passages of which I Peter 2.11–25 is typical. For an extended treatment on serving and blessing the community, see David M. Shaw, “A People Called: Narrative Transportation and Missional Identity in 1 Peter,” (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2017), 195.

31 Roger Helland and Leonard Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality: Embodying God’s Love from the Inside Out*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 35. The authors argue that “modern rationalization as intelligence is used not to get to the bottom of things but to organize life from the top down, through structures of hierarchy, specialization, regulation and control.

32 Heyns and Pieterse, *A Primer in Practical Theology*, 7.

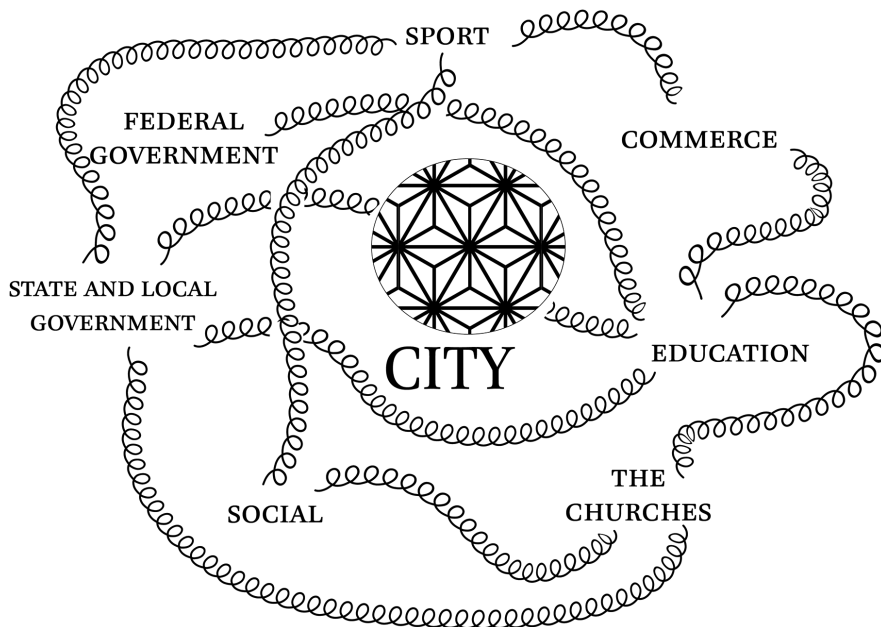


FIGURE 17.2 Systems of power in the secular city

### 6.1 *Power and the Christian Faith*

That the Christian faith exerts power is obvious in the New Testament narratives. Nicodemus put his finger on its reality: “He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.’” (John 3:2, NIV). Street chaplain training includes a review of the Pauline teaching in Ephesians to remind them of the unique place of Christ above all powers and the role of the Church in the secular city. In three carefully crafted areas of that letter, Paul teaches God’s people to deal with the powers of the age.<sup>33</sup> The teaching addresses Christ’s position as Lord, then the church’s role, and finally spiritual strengths for ministry.<sup>34</sup>

33 Such as Eph 1:20–23 (Christ over all powers); 3:7–10 (The Church as Christ’s instrument towards the powers); 6:10–20 (Power and the individual Christian). The teaching is framed around earthly powers.

34 Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (MI: Grand Rapids, Baker, 1992). Chapter 3. More than any New Testament book, Ephesians focuses on power and the powers. However, street chaplains choose to focus on Christ’s role above all the powers in order to clarify the difference between the servant role of Christians and the executive power role manifested in the secular society.



One example of New Testament teaching is the priority on the role of the volunteer in urban ministry. Capitalism dominates the secular agenda and puts an economic cost on every activity.<sup>35</sup> So, a competent Christian volunteer working in the city is a surprise to people and creates respect and curiosity.

In her book *Graceful Evangelism*, Frances Adeney has a helpful way of explaining the religious volunteer:

Voluntaryism, the idea of freely joining a church or offering to work for a good cause ... When applied to helping the poor, working with children in schools, nursing war veterans back to health, and other such humanitarian projects, voluntaryism takes on the qualities of grace. No one is forced to volunteer. Motives include a desire to grant something freely to another. Many times, what is granted is undeserved.<sup>36</sup>

There is a grace that flows from a (Christian) volunteer. In contrast to ordained ministry, voluntaryism is a grace of ministry uniquely available to the whole people of God. Two examples of gracious actions are offered in relation to missionary work.

## 6.2 *A Doorway to God's Actions*

At a faith level, the disciple is blessed as a volunteer when the act stretches the faith of the street chaplain. Take the case of the Good Samaritan. As he commits to care for the beaten man all he has is oil and wine. That is precisely the point. It is all he has. It was the best he had at the time. It is a similar story with the feeding of the five thousand. The five barley loaves and two fish were all that was available. Good mission is at its best when it provides a doorway through which the Lord can graciously work. In both cases, the Good Samaritan and the five thousand hungry people, found that the little they started with was the catalyst for the acts of God. This is another evidence of the 'upside down' nature of the kingdom of Christ when the actions of the believer are totally and generously given from the heart and not the pocket. That is how God works and why it has such a high impact on a secular culture which is so dependent upon economics as its engine.

## 6.3 *Humility as a Testimony*

The Christian volunteer also brings a certain humility to Christ's service. In his seminal book on mission Bosch discusses the value of humility in dialogue

35 Paul Collier, *The Future of Capitalism: Facing the New Anxieties* (Milton Keynes, UK: Penguin, 2018), 69.

36 Frances Adeney, *Graceful Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 39.

with other faiths saying, “there is something authentically Christian in an attitude of humility in the presence of other faiths”.<sup>37</sup> This is certainly true for Christians in the current climate of urban mission in a secular society. Foster reviews the attitude of urban Australians and identifies their interest and commitment to social justice and their suspicion towards large institutions like churches.<sup>38</sup> Institutions can have a reputation of oppression of the less powerful which is often a result of them stretching to meet government budget criteria while seeking at the same time to balance the needs of those they serve. Benson and Cronshaw discuss this tension of needing to compete for government funding while prioritising the support of those who are most in need in our society.<sup>39</sup> Inevitably not all institutions get the balance right and the media can be quick to draw attention to this unintended imbalance. This inflames urbanite sentiments. There is enough ‘bad news’ lingering in the minds of Australians about past Church misdemeanours that makes humility by those in mission incredibly important.

The humility of the street chaplains is expressed in two ways. Firstly, they consider compassion and care as their main practical goal. As Timothy Keller puts it, “the focus must not be on bending the will, but rather on melting the heart”.<sup>40</sup> This attitude is respected and appreciated in the urban environment. Secondly, the chaplains are also committed to a ‘responding to’ approach, rather than a ‘preaching at’ role on the streets. The acts of humility undertaken by these street chaplains all of whom are volunteers, speaks volumes about God’s love as the motive for ministry. This posture of humility further reduces criticism held towards the Church.

#### 6.4 *It Is a Grace upon the Receiver*

An act of care by a street chaplain opens a doorway to the heart. The Old Testament prophets saw that God would bring good news generously to the nations

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37 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485

38 Tim Foster, *The Suburban Captivity of the Church: Contextualising the gospel for Post-Christian Australia* (Moreland, VIC: Acorn, 2014), 104.

39 David M. Benson and Darren Cronshaw, “Competing with Purpose: Re-faithing Care in a Care-less Market.” In *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Maggie Kappelhoff and Steve Taylor (Leiden: Brill, 2024)

40 Cited in Timothy Sheridan, “Missional, Christ-Centred, or Gospel-Centred Preaching-What Is the Difference?” In *Reading the Bible Missionally*, edited by Michael Goheen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 272. Quoting Tim Keller “*Preaching from the Heart*” CD Preaching series.

(Is. 55.1,2). The apostle Paul clearly understood it (Eph. 2.8,9). A gospel embedded within the generous spirit of a volunteer will make alive the Good Samaritan story on the urban scene and point to the gospel.

By shaping suburban believers with clarity around how power works in the city, particularly addressing the way the volunteer can take a distinctive Christ-centred role, the ministry will avoid a more secular 'business model'<sup>41</sup> approach. The rhythms of grace in Christ will flow through the street chaplains as these scriptural priorities working together selflessly are identified and owned, not for themselves but for Christ's ministry to those on the streets. Christians will see the living God, and so will the people of the city in outstanding acts of care, and goodness.

## 7 A Third Element: Play as a Place for Mission

Why 'play' as a missional focus? The entertainment precinct provides an understanding of the concept of play in Western culture. Others have considered the role of play and its place in the gospel, including Moltmann and Neale.<sup>42</sup> More recently Edgar wrote of play as an essential way for "Christians to bring (the) future joyful life (of the gospel) into reality in the present and to 'play it' this way as though the kingdom were present".<sup>43</sup> Play is a feature of life in secular society. Australian psychologist and historian Ronald Conway comments: "What men and women do with their leisure in contemporary society is more apt to reveal their deeper concerns and personal preoccupations than what they do at their work".<sup>44</sup> Coming from a highly acclaimed psychologist, Conway's comment is worthy of notice, and gives chaplains a way of understanding why the secular society accepts such a high personal cost in its play. More recently, Taylor reflecting on the role of play as a feature of the secular age agrees with Conway and notes the emergence of the parade and the festival,<sup>45</sup> "as a sanctioned way (for people) to blow off the steam that builds up from the pressure of living under the requirements of eternity".<sup>46</sup>

41 Helland and Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality*, 32.

42 Jurgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Play* and Robert E Neal *The Crucifixion as Play*.

43 Brian Edgar, *The God Who PLAYS* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), chapter 8.

44 Ronald Conway, *Land of the Long Weekend* (South Melbourne, VIC: Sun Books, 1978), 287.

45 Taylor gives the title of 'carnival' to the emerging of public street parades in *A Secular Age*, 45–54.

46 Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 33.

Massaro takes the idea of play back to its origins in Judean history with the Mosaic accommodation of one Sabbath day each week set aside for worship of Israel's God: "Sabbath time is precious because it is a different type of time, when attention is devoted to things of intrinsic worth, valuable for their own sake and not for say instrumental or practical purpose".<sup>47</sup>

Yet even at the giving of those Commandments, a derailing of the Sabbath's intention was taking place. With Moses away some forty days, the impatience of the tribes grew to breaking point and a substitute in the shape of a calf god was built. A celebration followed and the scriptural comment is apt, that following a religious offering partying broke out, "the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to revel" (Ex. 32.6 NRSV). This ancient moment captures the dilemma between the original meaning of the sabbath as Massaro's "different type of time" and what has become the secular preference to treat this sort of time as secular 'play' time. Alexis McCrossan describes the change well: "Today, Sunday is a hybrid of religiosity, recreation, and recovery from the night before".<sup>48</sup> McCrossan captures it as an American dilemma, yet summarizes the impact more recently of secular in general.

Alcohol is the social lubricant of the 'play' scene.<sup>49</sup> Jill Stark, a prominent journalist on health issues in Australia observes, "More than a third of Australians drink to get drunk".<sup>50</sup> There are many reasons why people pursue social drunkenness and not the least is the loss of personal inhibitions, freeing the drinker to live with less stress and greater expression. The psychologist side in Conway sees drunkenness as a "revealing of the person's ... emotional self, both consciously and unconsciously, when at play or rest".<sup>51</sup>

Almost every secular city is home to an entertainment precinct where in the darker hours the crowds gather to carouse. All sorts of outcomes follow. Some drink to excess to hide their griefs. Others drink to be seen as worthy of their peer group. It is such an important space for the chaplain who finds it a time to offer physical and emotional care. This space of 'play' then becomes a missional place. In that space the chaplain finds the drinker exposed and vulnerable and in giving them care demonstrates the 'church in the world'.

47 Edward O'Flaherty, *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 135.

48 O'Flaherty. *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture*, 124.

49 Jill Stark, *High Sobriety: My Year Without Booze* (Brunswick, VIC: Scribe, 2013), 49.

50 Stark, *High Sobriety*, 49.

51 Conway, *Land of the Long Weekend*, 287.

## 8      The Fourth Element: Engagement in Secular and Missional Tensions

The presence of the street chaplains in public spaces brings them into contact with service providers who are also contributing to the peace of the city. This essentially social contact is appraised constantly by State-run services like the Police service. Slater, in addressing the contemporary plural context of the urban space considers this social tension between the services as important. In quoting Swift, she notes “that chaplains stand at the intersection between the historic presence of the Church in the public square, secularization, contemporary spiritual expression, and direct engagement with the fundamental realities of people’s lives”.<sup>52</sup> That the chaplains minister well in the secular environment is essential for their long-term future of that space. This will remain a social tension for them in the current secular culture.

To revisit the concept of power: the Police Service is the most obvious power on the streets. The presence of police ensures everyone is alert to the social dangers of the late-night scene. The crowds generally respect their power, but often rub against it. On the other hand, street chaplains with their highly visible uniform and commitment to care gain a lot of support from the crowds, rather than aggression. It is useful to think about these twin powers on the streets. On the one hand, the police with their many physical resources, and on the other hand, the chaplains who have little more than first aid skills and an ability to care. The chaplains, it must be noted, do not work formally on the streets with police unless specifically asked to do so. If they were seen as such, a sensitivity around cultural issues would certainly develop with various elements of the wider social crowd.

People respond to care with reciprocal respect and often, warm support. There is an insight noted in the interplay of the roles. Police generally accept the chaplains because they are committed to the same goals of social peace as the street chaplains. Chaplains embrace a continuing informal relationship with the Police as it speaks to their respect for the city powers.

Three commitments by the chaplains are important. First, they put a priority on service rather than an oral preaching of the gospel. This has been helpful in gaining police support. By doing so, many conflicted people benefit from the physical care offered by the chaplains. Some are also curious and start a conversation which leads on to matters of faith. A chaplain giving freely of the

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52 Slater, *Chaplaincy Ministry and the Mission of the Church*, 3, quoting Swift, C, *Hospital Chaplaincy in the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd edn., (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

love of Christ in deeds of care follows in the footsteps of Christ. There is a sense in which street chaplains follow Christ into the dark places of the city's streets and lanes. As Adler and Katoneene summarise the highlight of the New Delhi ecumenical celebration of 'Christ in the world', God loved the world to that extent that he gave his Son: "Christ the light did not remain outside the world to illuminate it from above, but entered into human life ... and radiates light from within."<sup>53</sup> This is an expression of care that is at home in Australian culture that values actions and not just rhetoric of care. Muriel Porter observed:

There are signs that the wider Australian community will listen seriously to the churches once certain conditions are met. In the land of the "fair go", where deeds speak louder than words, high-flown ideals are viewed with suspicion and authoritarianism is despised, the churches and leaders have to demonstrate, first and foremost, that they care. Once they do, they gain real respect.<sup>54</sup>

Actions of care of street chaplains are an expression of the gospel and speak warmly and well in a secular city environment.

Second, the chaplains find acceptance by meeting government compliance protocols. Of importance is a Police Check and the 'Working With Children Check', which together provide a measure of confidence of character for secular people.

Third, by establishing a commitment to inclusive male/female teams, the chaplains align with community expectations. These social secular commitments bring the chaplains significant acceptance leading to people and agencies including police collaborating with them.

## 9 Summary

The main features of mission to a secular urban environment have been sketched throughout this chapter. These features emerged because of street chaplains reading the New Testament as a missionary document. It is both possible and important for all Christians who are disciples of the Lord to pursue a

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53 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, "Laity", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 664 [658–664].

54 Muriel Porter, *Land of the Spirit? The Australian Religious Experience* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 100.

mission in secular cities. Roxburgh makes the helpful comment on the realities of New Testament mission, and our own, when he calls us to see Luke's method in Acts. Speaking of God's faithfulness, he writes of the "boundary-breaking actions of the Spirit in the midst of resistance and conflict from religious and civil authorities as well as from with the young community".<sup>55</sup> Christians, suitably aware of secular culture can relate to those "boundary-breaking actions of the Spirit" and do well in the city for the gospel. The four threads of suburban Christians serving in the urban situation with an adequate theology around how power is differentiated has proven to be key. As 'Church in the world' and being 'Christ in the world' – the world of late-night entertainment in the secular city – street chaplains are demonstrating new ways and models of the ministry of the whole people of God and of ordained ministry, albeit beyond the walls of the organisational church.

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**PART 5**

*Maturation*





## Introduction to Part 5

Maturation is a new theme, not named by either Adler and Katoneene in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* or Bosch's "Mission as Ministry by the Whole people of God." However, it is present in several places in *Readings in World Mission*. Jurgen Moltmann calls for the church to grow up and for theology to come of age. For Moltmann, a sign of maturation is for the laity to think independently. For Elizabeth Behr-Sigel and Virginia Fabella, maturation is evident when grace is not subordinated to a biological determinism. Communities in which the charisma of the many is present make possible *ecclesia discens*, a church that is learning with and from the world.

We wish to elevate this theme, making it separate and distinct. As the Spirit renews the church, old and young, female and male find voice. In response to change, new forms of lay activity emerge. It returns us to where we began, with Christ in the world. It suggests that the mission of the church and the ministries of lay and ordained both begin and end in Christ. All of work is caught up in the work of Christ the fulfiller.

A second chapter by Preece continues his narrative of Lausanne's engagement with faith and work. This chapter spans the period 2000–2010, tracing aspects of a global theology of work latent and overt in the history of the Lausanne Marketplace Ministry movement, Theology of Work Project, Macquarie Christian Studies Institute, Zadok/Ethos and others. Preece contends that this global movement of integrating work and faith has sadly left the local church largely untouched. Preece argues that Newbigin provides a thoroughly trinitarian and creation-based sphere–sovereignty approach, one which balances church and workplace-oriented theology. Such an approach offers greater promise in bridging missional church with workplace mission, and thus connecting the two key movements of Faith at Work (FAW) and Missional Church. Preece concludes that it is only through an integrated trinitarian theology, and robust rejection of the sacred–secular divide that a global theology of work can overcome any isolating tendencies in either Missional church or FAW movements.

So, what is the future of transforming work? The whole volume hopefully points in fruitful directions, but a final two chapters were especially relevant to this question as they probe future trends.

Victoria Lorrimar explores changing dynamics of work in an increasingly technological world with developments in Genetic, Robotic, Intelligence and Nanotechnologies. She enquires as to what principles can guide us for responsible engagement with technology, how optimistic or concerned should we be

about the role of technology, and what are implications for global injustices and human flourishing? Drawing on Bosch's missiological paradigm of 'ministry for the whole people of God', Lorrimar queries what additional resources are required to engage in work that is disrupted by increasing technology. She sets her discussion within the broader understanding that humans should be seen as 'co-creators' who participate in ongoing creation, both distinct from and subordinate to God's work of creation. She notes the barriers to that creativity which ensures that we flourish only when our creativity is in alignment with God's purposes. Therefore, any human enhancement technologies viewed through the lenses of Christian vocation and *missio Dei* rules out any application of technology that leads to injustice. She concludes that true co-creation will expand our understanding of *missio Dei* through every vocational contour and enable us to re-faith our work in an increasingly technological world.

Brian Harris and Jon Bergmann argue that mission must include crossing technological boundaries but ask what does transforming work mean for a world where Artificial Intelligence may reshape or even do away with work for the majority? They suggest perhaps it is more important to develop a theology of leisure. Engaging with Bosch's conceptualization that mission can be understood in terms of frontier and boundary crossing this then becomes a point of intersection with a theology of work. They reframe the missional question as the finding of meaning in a post-work world. They conclude that the value of meaning-making for humanity is still to be found in the *imago Dei*. They concede that although their chapter raises provocative claims regarding the future of work that may or may not come to pass, nevertheless, it invites the church and its academy to imagine possible future worlds. This is a call both prophetic and predictive. As they wrestle with issues never dreamt of when Bosch wrote, they practice a transformational hermeneutics that provides contemporary articulations of the *missio Dei* in relation to being human.

Our final contributor, Robyn Reynolds, weaves a beautiful appeal for listening to Indigenous Australian and female voices. Bosch has been criticized elsewhere, for example by Kirsteen Kim, for his lack of attention to feminism as an essential post-modern issue as well as ecology and Indigenous spiritualities. Kim queries whether Bosch's "paradigm is as post-modern as he claims and therefore whether his missiology is appropriate for the twenty-first century."<sup>1</sup> Bosch never claimed to be the last word on mission. As a writer in Africa in the 1970s he could not necessarily anticipate the challenges of the 21st century, though other contemporaries may have foreseen the importance of feminist,

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1 Kim, Kirsteen. "Post-modern mission: A paradigm shift in David Bosch's theology of mission?" *International Review of Mission* 89 (353) (April 2000): 179.

ecological and Indigenous perspectives. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on us to repent of any latent sexism that preferences white male voices, as we explore the importance of transforming our study and practice of mission, particularly as applied to work spheres. In editing this book to begin with, this was an underlying challenge for us. As editors we reminded each other of the writing of Elizabeth Behr-Sigel who offered an ecclesiology of church as the pilgrim people. This ecclesiology understands a moving towards God's kingdom that is in solidarity with all of humanity, bearing hope that is "mysteriously present in us and among us".<sup>2</sup> Drawing on images of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, Behr-Sigel asks how all people, particularly lay women, can bear witness to the gifts of the Spirit. Reynolds echoes Behr-Sigel for us in underlining the importance and benefit of attending to the voices of women and especially Indigenous women. Reynolds highlights that any formation of a theology of mission and ministry must recognize gender as a constitutive factor. Further still that space must be created, indeed humbly sought after which embraces the wisdom and truth of all persons, especially those who are marginalized. Reynolds discusses refreshingly alternative perspectives on themes of workplace in mission. She also suggests that attending to art and ritual alongside books and dialogue will lead us in fruitful new directions.

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2 Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, "The Meaning of the Participation of Women in the Life of the Church," in *Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1977), 18–28. Excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 254–55.

# Newbigin Bridging Ecumenical and Evangelical Faith at Work and Missional Church Movements from c. 1990 Onwards

*Gordon Preece*

*In Memory of Dr Clint le Bruyns, 'World of Work' theologian.<sup>1</sup>*



## Abstract

My Chapter 6 focused on the Lausanne Movement's ongoing debate about relative priorities of evangelism and social concern from 1974–2004. By Pattaya 2004 that dialogue had been replicated regarding work's role as a means to evangelism or of worth as worship in itself. It then became a trialogue about the related triune God of mission and the commissions flowing from the work of each divine person commissioning human work. Chapter 18 traces developments of lay workplace movements and how they became displaced from their original role supporting God's scattered people at work to being mainly church ministry supporters. We then follow Paul Williams' challenging question concerning the need for the relatively independent Missional Church and Faith at Work (FAW) movements to together re-engage the world after Christendom. As Lesslie Newbigin was a forefather of the missional church movement re-engaging secular society and his (and Kuyper's) creational-sphere based theology of work has inspired many key workplace ministries we see him having a key bridging role. Newbigin also helped the Lausanne Workplace Network from the 2000s to 2010 culminating in Lausanne III's Cape Town Commitment. Newbigin continues to help bridge the

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Clint Le Bruyns was a member of the Lausanne Marketplace Ministry/Workplace Network since Pattaya 2004 and a keynote speaker at the 2019 Manila Global Work Forum. He was also a beloved member of Theology of Work's editorial committee from 2010. Clint opened our eyes to a global workplace scarred by injustice. He died tragically at 48 in January 2021 of COVID-19 on mission in South Africa.



gaps between Missional Church and Workplace Networks as well as ecumenical and evangelical approaches.

## Keywords

Newbigin – Spheres – Kuyper – Cape Town – Manila – Faith at Work – Lausanne Market/Workplace Network

## 1 Introduction

My earlier chapter 6 first sketched a background of earlier ecumenical missionary and Faith and Work (FAW) movements from around World War II through to the 1970s. Though these movements were increasingly domesticated in Sunday Church-based lay ministry by 1980.

Meanwhile Evangelical mission movements focused on ongoing debates from 1974 to 2004 over relative prioritization of evangelism and social concern within the Lausanne Movement where John Stott played a key role (in occasional dialogue with David Bosch). After 1983's Wheaton Statement, a consensus about mutual and integral mission, involving both evangelism and social concern, was emerging.<sup>2</sup> It took time for this breakthrough to enable 'secular' work's instrumental role as a means to evangelism as seen in Lausanne Congress II in Manila 1989. Work was more thoroughly integrated as valuable in itself by the Marketplace Ministry Issue Group birthed at the 2004 Pattaya Forum, transcending the divisive Pattaya 1980 debate privileging evangelism.

Chapter 18 firstly picks up theologically from Pattaya 2004's extended dialogue about integration of work into mission into a dialogue about related missional roles of God's triune persons and their leading but cooperative commissions or mandates (especially the creation commission) empowering human work in various creational and cultural spheres, through the thought of Abraham Kuyper and Lesslie Newbigin. The convergence of these theological developments contributed importantly to the Cape Town Commitment, reached by Lausanne Congress III in 2010 and led by John Stott successor Chris Wright as chief author.

Besides Lausanne III Commitment's key theological developments of a trinitarian theology and the creation commission, Chapter 18 will secondly adapt

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<sup>2</sup> See David Bosch's summary in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 20th Anniversary edn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011). 403–8.

it as a key to unlocking the missional Church's and FAW movement's shared potential. Economist and former Regent College Marketplace co-ordinator Paul Williams' suggestive *Exiles on Mission* envisions the anointed Missional Church and Faith at Work (FAW) movements positively re-engaging the world together after Christendom's collapse.

However, these movements were largely disconnected, to the disappointment of the ecumenical–evangelical and missional church forefathers Bosch and Newbigin (1909–98). Given Bosch's untimely death, aged 62 in 1992, and his suspicion of Kuyper's creation theology, it needed the “apostolic”<sup>3</sup> Newbigin's more thoroughly trinitarian, creation-based and sphere-sovereignty approach (drawing on former Dutch Prime Minister/theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), to help bridge missional church with workplace mission. This is not only seen in the Lausanne Workplace Network and Cape Town Commitment (which we will conclude with) but in related church-connected missional movements like Regent College Marketplace, Tim Keller's Redeemer Presbyterian and Center for Faith and Work and City to City church planting movement, the John Stott founded and mainly Mark Greene led LICC, the Theology of Work (TOW) Project on whose board I serve, and Tom Nelson's Made to Flourish Network. We will now set them in context.

## 2 Developments towards the Missional Church and Faith and Work Movements and Newbigin's Involvement

### 2.1 *The Lay Ministry Era before the 1980s*

As noted in my chapter 6, Newbigin was the final general secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in the 1950s and first WCC director of World Mission and Evangelism from 1961. Newbigin pushed both ecumenical (and evangelical) movements biblically beyond the lay clericalization causing the WCC Department of the Laity's closure in 1971.

Given Lausanne's “roots,” like IMC, date back to the Edinburgh's Missionary Conference of 1910, whose centenary coincided with Lausanne III at Cape Town 2010, its public neglect was sadly noted by an ecumenical respondent.<sup>4</sup> Both my chapters take an historical perspective as critical to recover this heritage of ecumenical and evangelical engagement regarding missional, public

3 Paul S. Williams, *Exiles on Mission: How Christians Can Thrive in a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2020), 10.

4 Robert J. Schreiter, “From the Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment: A Theological Assessment,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35(2) (April 2011): 88–92.

and workplace theology, learning from each others' strengths and weaknesses, not re-drawing the wheel or going alone. Evangelicalism has had its own clericalization of lay ministry and politicization of its mission and view of work, only on the other, more neo-liberal side, recently trumping the more Left-leaning, liberationist WCC.

David Miller notes rightly that lay ministry had lost steam by the 1980s due to: (1) increasingly clericalized focus and control; (2) related diversion of lay ministry to the church, not the world; (3) marginality from theological schools; and (4) mainstream denominations' prophetic preaching became anti-business—critique overwhelming constructive evaluation and equipping for engagement.<sup>5</sup>

Often, lay or workplace ministry centres or courses were seen as non-core by seminaries focused on ordination training. As mission strategist Loren Mead said, in this sense, "Lay Ministry is at a dead end," advancing little on pioneers Yves Congar (Catholic) and Hendrik Kraemer (WCC) in the 1950s.

In short, we're not dealing with a problem that only resides in our thinking or our programs or processes. We are caught up in a ... set of relationships that reinforce ... the status quo. Marketplace ministry goes against the self-interest of key, clerical and pseudo-clerical players within the system. The whole reward structure of the system is based on what happens inside church not outside.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 *The Faith at Work Movement 1990 Onwards*

We now change gears from shifting ecumenical emphases on liturgical and social activist Church over mission and workplace and over-emphasised ecclesiology (Church) to focus more on laology (God's working people scattered)—in wider Evangelical FAW and Missional Church movements.

Despite lay ministry movements narrowing focus from workplace to church in the 1980s, a faithful workplace remnant remained, hungry for "reframing"<sup>7</sup> work. This was fed by the FAW movement from the 1990s through many books by Miroslav Volf's paradigm-changing *Work in the Spirit* (1991), William Diehl,

5 Williams, *Exiles*, 17, paraphrasing Miller, *God at Work*, n.p.

6 Loren Mead, *Laynet*, "The Coalition for the Ministry in Daily Life," 2004 n.p.

7 See Ian Barns on "re-framing" in his "Going Public: Reflections on Zadok's Role in Australian Society," *Zadok Papers S86* (Autumn 1997), 8–11, regarding Lesslie Newbigin's "fiduciary framework" of secular society in *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1984), 30; cf. recently, Paul S. Williams, Executive Producer at <https://www.reframecourse.com/> and Alan Hirsch and Mark Nelson, *Reframation: Seeing God, People, and Mission Through Reenchanted Frames* (100 Movements: 2019).

*The Monday Connection* (1991), Robert Banks, *God the Worker* (1993) and *All the Business of Life* (1997), Os Guinness, *The Call* (1998), and Paul Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity* (1999). My own *Changing Work Values* (1995) and *The Viability of the Vocation Tradition* (1998) (built on my mentors Volf and Banks). FAW also had some influence in Australia through the Zadok Institute (now Ethos: EA Centre for Christianity and Society), Ridley College Centre for Applied Christian Ethics and Lay Liberation courses, and Macquarie Christian Studies Institute (2004–7); and the Lausanne Marketplace/Workplace Networks and the Theology of Work Project in which I've had board roles. Through this shift of energy and thought a handful of workplace ministries became a thousand plus through the 2000s.<sup>8</sup> The FAW movement is still not exhausted, hence no closing date above.

Despite different emphases, most FAW ministries challenged platonically influenced sacralization of ministry subordinating everyday vocation. This dualistic hierarchy ignored or denigrated the working class, mainly working with things or matter<sup>9</sup>—which did not matter compared to higher-ranking “people work,” of many Christians in teaching and health professions. At the top are clergy and missionaries doing God's spiritual, sacramental, or Word work. Though increasingly charismatic entrepreneurs, CEOs and creatives are top today.

Horizontally, most FAW entities sought to reconnect Sunday and Monday, with Sunday equipping for Monday mission in a broad presence, practice, profession sense, not just an evangelistic proclamation sense. Williams rightly

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8 “The vast array of loosely-connected initiatives ... include: membership networks for pastors like Made To Flourish; numerous school-based centres like Wheaton's Center for Faith and Innovation; faith and work columns ... and ... websites; ... centres for working professionals in Denver, Chicago and Nashville; the American Enterprise Institute's Values and Capitalism program [and the Acton Institute] ; ... Sunday School curricula like ... *For the Life of the World*; church-based centres like Redeemer Presbyterian's ... ; conferences; academic journals; entrepreneurship incubators like Praxis Labs; industry-specific small groups; financial literacy classes ... ; and [many] more church resources and books ....” Adam Joyce, “Theology for the one percent: The problem with the evangelical faith and work movement,” *ABC Religion and Ethics Online*. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/theology-for-the-one-percent-the-evangelical-faith-and-work-mov/11625040>. Accessed 22 Oct 2019.

9 Joyce, “Theology for the one per cent,” and <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/october/our-october-issue-rethinking-vocation.html> including Jeff Haanen of Denver Institute's “God of the second-shift” and others, have noted the absence of working-class people and concerns in the FAW movement; cf. Gordon Preece, *Changing Work Values* (Melbourne: Acorn, 1995) on my Malabar parish's WorkVentures job-creation business in working-class Matraville and then Surrey Hills in Sydney.

notes the Lausanne Marketplace and Business as Ministry groups as instead seeing intrinsic worth in work and business.<sup>10</sup>

Miller and Williams both recognize increased momentum in the FAW movement, as does elder statesman, Paul Stevens, from Regent Vancouver. He depicts this process as a “mutation” of “the ‘laity’ movement ... into the theology of work movement” fuelled by:

- 1960s: Vatican II’s rediscovery of the world and “lay apostolate”.
- 1970s: Charismatic Spiritual Gifts Movement.
- 1980s: Small Group and House Church Movement.<sup>11</sup>
- 1990s: Holistic church; Missional church; Pentecostal Seven Mountains movements.
- 2000s: Faith@Work Movement, Business as Mission, Marketplace movement.
- 2000s: Theology of Work Project and church-based initiatives.<sup>12</sup>

Stevens asks though “has the [mainstream and WCC] laity movement been overtaken by the [evangelical] marketplace movement? And why has the latter largely bypassed the church?” Firstly, he cites Ben Clare “that rather than the Marketplace Movement being a natural heir and extension to the lay movement it actually marks its retreat.”<sup>13</sup> Marketplace leaders have given up “*Liberating the Laity*”<sup>14</sup> in despair at its pathetic pace.

Stevens sees this being “because the implicit clericalism ... could not be cracked without emphasizing what ordinary people were doing to love God and neighbour for most ... waking hours, namely work. So now, in North America ... hundreds of organizations claim ... to integrate faith and work, mostly at the edge of the church ... in a very partial way.”<sup>15</sup>

Others are more holistic. These include Stevens’ own Regent College, Biblical Graduate School of Theology in Singapore, and Hong Kong and South Korea’s lay educational efforts in universities and seminaries, such as the Business Ministry Institute. But there is a “Missing Link.” Though there is “a global movement of integrating work and faith ... *it has left the church largely untouched*,” with “some notable exceptions” we have already mentioned.

10 Williams, *Exiles*, 20, n.20.

11 Robert and Julia Banks, *The Home Church* (Sutherland: Albatross), 1989.

12 R. Paul Stevens, “Covid 19 and the Kingdom of God,” *Zadok Papers*, (S254, Spring 2021).

13 Ben Care, “The Rise and Fall of the Modern Lay Movement. 1945-c. 1985,” LICC (July 2011), unpublished.

14 R. Paul Stevens, *Liberating the Laity: Equipping All the Saints for Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1984).

15 Stevens, “Covid 19,” 9.

“But why in general is this swirling activity and seminal thought happening around but not in the *ecclesia*?” Stevens asks.<sup>16</sup> There are manifold reasons, “not least the embedded clericalism, tradition, and ... sacred–secular dualism ... embodied in most local church life” to the detriment of “the priesthood, prophethood and princely rule of *all believers*.”

Stevens sees opportunities post-COVID 19 with the breaking down of the home versus work divide through Zoom enabling theological education for the whole people of God *in situ* without withdrawal for years from their homes, communities and work. Pastors too could visit work-home places to see and nurture work-faith integration.<sup>17</sup>

Paul Williams, Stevens’ successor at Regent, similarly warns against the default tendency of defensive churches and theological colleges to engage in post-Christendom inward retrenchment,<sup>18</sup> as if Church and work is a zero-sum competition. Hence, the FAW and Missional Church movements are, regrettably, relatively independent. Further, it was a popular sport in the FAW movement to criticize churches and clergy for little support for workplace, entrepreneurial and social justice ministries. But new theological emphases and pastoral measures are seeking to bridge the gap and bless each other’s ministries.

However, theologically, even well-meaning language like Nelson’s “The Church at Work;”<sup>19</sup> can confuse. Our primary biblical identity is the *laos* or people of God mentioned over 300 times at strategic moments in salvation history.<sup>20</sup> It generates a weekly rhythm of gathering/*ekklesia*, and scattering/*diaspora*, in exile. This may seem pedantic, but lucid language moulds thinking and enables reframing. Further, if Church covers Sunday and Monday, it becomes monotonous and imperious. And practically, talk of ‘church at work’ makes defensive pastors fear sheep-stealing.

Nonetheless, to reverse the dominance, and have workplace mission dominant over Church as some entrepreneurs want, is unfruitful. They may understandably feel used as walking wallets to support Church causes but unsupported or ill equipped for stewardship of life and livelihood. Then reactive Workplace Ministry can be individualistic and flat-earthed, with mission

16 Stevens, “Covid 19,” 10.

17 Stevens, “Covid 19,” 10.

18 Williams, *Exiles*, 20 cf. 12.

19 Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), ch. 10.

20 Preece, *Marketplace Ministry*, 28–29 citing Graham A. Cole, “The Conception of the Church: Towards Conceptual Clarification.” In *Church, Worship and the Local Congregation*, edited by G. Webb (Homebush: Anzea, 1987), 2–17.

overtaking the centrality of holistic worship and witness—both gathered publicly and scattered (in twos, Mark 6.7). Public mission is motivated by a call to worship: “Let everything that breathes praise the Lord” (Psalm 150.6).

Stevens rightly emphasizes the priority of God’s Kingdom over the Church in our post-Christendom context. But he refuses to join the post-church people either. He sees church as necessary but not sufficient. Stevens follows colleague Charles Ringma’s three-fold stress on the Church as sign, servant, and sacrament of the Kingdom of God.<sup>21</sup> But as Stevens’ quote from Psalm 150.6 shows, Creation is even broader than Kingdom now, though ultimately commensurate.

Such modern dualism and disconnection above, between the two most promising missional movements in postmodern exile is lamentable. The most promising examples of connecting them, that Stevens and Regent successor Williams see, besides Regent, are Keller’s Redeemer City to City and Tom Nelson’s Made to Flourish Networks. Both, we shall soon see, are in debt to Newbigin’s balanced church and workplace-oriented theology.

Surprisingly, Williams, now CEO at London’s UK Bible Society, does not mention LICC, perhaps as it is more parachurch than church. But LICC never forgets that it is the outreach arm of Stott’s All Souls Langham Place. And it has reframed FAW within an outward-looking Re-Imagining Church framework for whole-life discipleship and fruitful personal and communal growth, through the Evangelical Alliance and Church of England.<sup>22</sup>

### 3 Newbigin as Bridge Builder between FAW and Missional, Evangelical and Ecumenical Churches

#### 3.1 *Newbigin’s Unique Ecumenical Missional Church Experience and Theology of Work*

We have just seen how key FAW leaders saw and sought to fill, a gap between it, the Church and Missional Church movement. Not least was Newbigin, whose high view of Church, and workplace mission, presents a potential bridge between these movements, and also partly between evangelicalism and ecumenism.

21 R. Paul Stevens, *The Kingdom of God in Working Clothes: The Market and the Reign of God* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2022), 154.

22 Mark Greene, *Fruitfulness on the Frontline: making a difference where you are* (Nottingham: IVP, 2014).



Missional church pioneers Bosch (in chapter 6) and Newbigin, both have a high, missional view of the Church. For Newbigin: “By calling itself the *ecclesia Theou*, ... the church claimed to be the public assembly to which all human-kind was summoned, which was called not by the town clerk but by God. In such an assembly no earthly emperor could claim supremacy.”<sup>23</sup> This is true of both God’s rule over the silversmiths’ guild and of government ecclesias/assemblies in Ephesus’ theatre (Acts 19:21–41).

Further, Newbigin, as a bishop of the ecumenical Church of South India, prioritizes the local church as the “primal engine of change” contrary to many program-oriented and politicized evangelical and ecumenical churches:

Our powerful denominational and interdenominational agencies for social and political action develop ways of thinking and speaking which distance them from the ordinary congregation.... Our political and social programs are detached from the gospel of forgiveness ... announced in Church ... They become simply programs of political parties and secular pressure groups.<sup>24</sup>

The same secularizing sociological process can corrupt Evangelical FAW movements. Newbigin notes how increasingly specialized and managerial church agencies get primacy over the ecclesially formed *laos* in their scattered vocations. This robs these vocations of an inbuilt sense of purposeful work outlasting individual workers, turning it into toil for a consumer economy or utilitarian public life. The fact-value dichotomy post-Enlightenment only counts facts, or what can be counted—for example in gross domestic product (GDP). And values are divorced from virtues, and privatized in families or leisure.<sup>25</sup> This privatizes much evangelical church ethics, as bedroom, not boardroom and ballot-box ethics.

Newbigin providentially returned to a secularized Europe in 1974, the year of Lausanne I, after a fruitful 25 year mission with the ecumenical Church of South India. This led him to advocate and model cross-cultural missional engagement with post-Christendom Europe. Several profoundly missional publications followed plus the international Gospel and our Culture Network

23 Newbigin, 1984, 33.

24 Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans/WCC, 1991), 86.

25 Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1986, 29–34. Contrast biblical households including public workspaces e.g., for Paul’s tentmaking (Ac. 18:3).



in the 1980s and 1990s. Newbigin's big biblical gospel emphasized cosmic reconciliation combined with evangelistic warmth, transformational discipleship, and ecumenical and global unity. It especially energized "ecclesial mission" and "lay ministry movements."<sup>26</sup>

The Missional Church movement drew theologically on Newbigin and Bosch to re-engage secular culture (see chapter 6). Others, Reformed theologically but radically missional in practice, include Keller's Centre Church and global urban church planting model, City to City.<sup>27</sup> Another Gospel Coalition Reformed group is Nelson's Made to Flourish Network. It is "A Pastor's Network for the Common Good ... who seek to encourage and resource each other to integrate faith, work, and economic wisdom for ... flourishing ... communities."<sup>28</sup> It originated in his apology to church members for ignoring their work-ministry.

Nelson credits Keller's inspiration for his own church's workplace practices<sup>29</sup> and the ongoing influence on both Missional church and FAW movements of Newbigin's call to integrated ecclesiology, public theology and engaged eschatology: "The congregation has to be a place where its members are trained, supported and nourished in ... priestly ministry in the world.... to think out the problems that face them in their secular work." Further, "if the gospel is to challenge ... public life ..., ... to occupy the 'high ground' ... vacated in the noon-time of 'modernity,' it will not be by forming a Christian political party, or by

26 Williams, *Exile*, 7–11.

27 Timothy Keller and Katharine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavour: Connecting Your Work with God's Plan* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012). Alsdorf, a former hi-tech CEO, founded Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work. J.N. Koning's Ph.D. "The Relevance and Suitability of Tim Keller's Contextualization for Reformed evangelical ministry in urban South Africa" endorses and adapts Redeemer's model to engage South Africa's poverty and racial challenges. Ph.D. thesis, North-Western University. [https://repository.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/32750/Koning\\_JN.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1](https://repository.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/32750/Koning_JN.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1) Accessed 22 October 2020. Would the more Christocentric Barthian (and Bonhoeffer) influenced Bosch agree, given his [and John de Gruchy and Alan Hirsch's critiques of the minority but influential Afrikaaner Reformed Church's adaptation of Dutch neo-Kuyperian creational sphere sovereignty from theological categories of Protestant-Catholic and secularist into separatist territorial racial/ethnic categories? See J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2013), "Part One: David Bosch in Context", especially 14 n. 38, 20 n. 69.

28 [www.madetoflourish.org/about/](http://www.madetoflourish.org/about/)

29 See Nelson, *Work Matters*, 187–89 on his previous dualism, and 198 on Redeemer. The Gospel Coalition Faith and Work Channel, Theology of Work Project (whose board I serve), and Oikonomia Network, for training pastors on faith, work and economics, are related FAW organisations.

aggressive propaganda.... It will only be by ... the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known and experienced ... in ... every sector of public life to claim it for Christ." This new-creational "embodied community," inhabiting an authentic "alternative plausibility structure" to secular business, is essential to bridging Sunday and Monday.<sup>30</sup> For Newbigin, famously, "The Church is the hermeneutic of the Gospel."<sup>31</sup>

Williams, while seeing both Missional Church and FAW movements positively, fears that institutional inertia and post-Christendom defensiveness, produce a default possessive posture towards members' time, energies and money being primarily for inward church-oriented activities. Theological colleges and churches, old and new, high and low, treat the ecclesial and scattered dimensions of God's people as a competitive zero-sum game where one must lose. Williams sees this as "a disaster for the health of the church in the West."<sup>32</sup>

This scarcity model needs overcoming by forming intentional networks and strategic synergies that Keller, Nelson and Newbigin mention. Similarly, both Lausanne Market/Workplace Networks from 2004 on and the ground-breaking ROW, started in 2007,<sup>33</sup> refused to scapegoat churches and clergy. They preferred to provide them with tools to equip for marketplace mission.

In the contested workplace ministry space, some in ROW sought to develop a biblical basis for unity, like the Lausanne Covenant, for orthodox, trinitarian credal FAW organizations.<sup>34</sup> But we did so through a free online biblical commentary on work from ten years of communal biblical exegesis and application by many scholars and a large, partly cross-cultural and occupationally varied editorial committee. The commentary was from a largely western perspective but offered freely to a global audience to contextualize and adapt. It is now multilingual.

ROW's joint mid-2010 meeting in Hong Kong with the Lausanne Marketplace group which master networker Timothy Lui and I facilitated, was a key step toward greater global participation in our editorial processes. We read

30 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 230–33 and 99, cited in Nelson, *Work Matters*, 187, 193, 199.

31 In context: "the primary reality ... for a Christian impact on public life is the Christian congregation ... that people should ... believe that ... the last word in human affairs is represented by ... a cross?.... The only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it." Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 227.

32 Williams, *Exile*, 20.

33 <http://www.theologyofwork.org/about>.

34 Instead, ROW worked directly from Scripture but operated "within the framework of the trinitarian Apostles and Nicene Creeds' depiction of God's work" (parallel to Lausanne Market/Workplace Network in 2004 and 2010).

Scripture and our commentary together across cross-cultural and workplace differences in a significant experience of global unity towards a workplace and missional church theology.<sup>35</sup>

These experiments fit with Newbigin's calling for "the vigorous development of lay programs in which those in specific areas of secular work can explore together the possibilities of subversion."<sup>36</sup> It frees Scripture from individualistic academic and economic hyper-specialization. The decline of the big story biblical theology movement has often made Scripture inaccessible, leaving laity ill equipped to relate it to their work.

Newbigin also advocates a lay missiology: "The missionary encounter with our culture ... will require the energetic fostering of a de-clericalized lay theology ... [in] a multitude of places" so the church also "through its synods and hierarchies" can make informed pronouncements on "hard issues of public life." "And we need to create, above all, possibilities in every congregation for laypeople to share ... experience of their weekday work and to seek illumination from the gospel.... Here is ... the real missionary encounter."<sup>37</sup> This captures the vibrant rhythm between the laos' gathering on Sunday reinforcing its identity and story and scattering at work on Monday showing its relevance. A further key area for joining congregational Sunday worship and Monday public worship/sacrificial service (Rom. 12.1–2) at work is a movement from applied *theology* of work to full-bodied aesthetic, emotional and mindful *worship*, music and spiritual practices to powerfully shape a Christian world and work-view.

James K.A. Smith, combining Reformed and majority-world Pentecostal influences, argues that secular liturgies and "The Call of the Mall"<sup>38</sup> by an

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35 While dealing as a global editorial group with Paul's household codes regarding submission in Ephesians 5–6 we discussed its differing shape in real situations from a Korean in a unionised workplace dispute to an Asian general refusing orders to eliminate their President's opponents. A leading US CEO whose workplace mission was in Rwanda dialogued with two South African Evangelical liberation theologians. Clint Le Bruyns' master's student Shembiso Zwane's thesis was on the Laborers in the Vineyard and the International Labor Organization's Standards for Dignified Work. Scripture came alive in this cross-cultural setting. An equally global evangelical workplace ministry conference was held at Macquarie [University] Christian Studies Institute in Sydney 2001 hosted by Robert Banks and Paul Stevens where an Ecuadorian spoke of Capitalist oppressors while a Czech and North American spoke of running an ethical car repair business in corrupt ex-Soviet Bratislava. Each integrated faith and work but faced different Pharaohs.

36 Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*, 82–83.

37 Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*, 142–43.

38 Paco Underhill, *The Call of the Mall: A Walking Tour Through the Crossroads of Our Shopping Culture* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

array of media, cannot merely be countered by Reformed worldview and vocational teaching in rationalist trickle-down form. As well as corporate worship and community practices of radical hospitality, reconciliation and shared resources are required to shape our desires. Such communal practices are reaching a catalytic stage of producing fine resources for churches and workplace Christians.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.2 *Spheres of Creation and Mission: Newbigin and Lausanne III Cape Town 2010*

To help overcome incommensurate modern specializations and splits, Newbigin draws on Kuyper's "sphere sovereignty":

the doctrine that God had given—as part of the order of creation—a measure of autonomy to each ... major area of human life, including ... art, politics, science, ethics and faith ... [through] the human community ... responsible for the[ir] development.... [E]ach sphere of society has a God-given task and competence ... limited by the sphere's own intrinsic nature.... It ... avoids both the post-Enlightenment idea of the total autonomy of these spheres and the medieval idea that all spheres should be under the authority of the church.... For such a de-clericalized theology, the role of the church will be that of servant, not mistress.<sup>40</sup>

Newbigin's concrete and specific servant-based ecclesiology and missiology is both creationally sphere-based and eschatological/new creational. The church is not God's Kingdom but between old and new creation seeking God's Kingdom which is "creation healed."<sup>41</sup>

The Church can be the first-fruit, sign and instrument of God's new creation planted firmly in the context of some segment of the old creation.... Human life is lived not just in "the world" but in concrete and particular communities - this village, this factory, this school, this government office, this suburb, this trade union, this professional association .... If the

39 Prominent here are Kara Martin, *Workship and Worship 11* (Midview City, Graceworks, 2017, 2018) and Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B. Willson, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), who pay attention to unheard global, rural and working-class voices and the balance between worship for gathering ch. 11 and scattering ch. 12.

40 *Foolishness*, 143.

41 Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian* (London: Penguin, 1982 n.p.).

Church is to be in and for the world, it must be in and for these particular segments of the world.<sup>42</sup>

Having shown how Kuyper and Newbigin clearly influenced missional churchmen Keller and Nelson<sup>43</sup> we will now see their significance, and that of spheres of creation and workplace theology for Pattaya 2004 and Lausanne III in 2010.

With some FAW groups, Lausanne Market/Workplace and Missional Church movements developed in the 2000s, Lausanne Congress III met in Cape Town in October 2010 with a big workplace ministry group of some 800 out of 4000.

In the Workplace Multiplex we reaffirmed the trinitarian framework of three Great Commissions/Mandates we had stressed at Pattaya 2004. If Lausanne I gave us the Great Commission (of the Son) and Lausanne II gave us the Great Commandment (of the Spirit), we posed the question: would Lausanne III affirm the equal role of the Creation Commission (Gen 1.26–28) of the Father/Creator (each trinitarian person cooperating in each other's leading work). We need this trinitarian ballast for a balanced view of Christian and human life and work in light of economic trinitarian worldly life and work. And, as in Pattaya 2004, the 9 to 5, workplace window (spheres of society) and 10/40 unreached people groups were both affirmed as part of the creation commission and Great Commission respectively.

The Sacred–Secular (or Sunday–Monday, clergy–laity) Divide was the keynote addressed through Mark Greene's booklet and address.<sup>44</sup> It was exemplified by LICC's great success in reorienting UK churches towards whole-life workplace discipleship.

These ideas were incorporated, not into a founding Lausanne Covenant, nor a Manila Manifesto of timely action, but in the *Capeown Commitment* (CC), written largely by Christopher J.H. Wright, Stott's successor as chair of the Lausanne Theology group. It begins with a trinitarian foundation of God's "comprehensive love" drawn from John, and personal, social and cosmic reconciliation from Paul. It has Two Parts: "Commitments of Belief" and "Commitments of Action."<sup>45</sup>

42 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1977), "The Role of the Parish in Society," 85–87.

43 Note also Kuyperian missiologist Michael Goheen, *As the Father Sent Me, I Am Sending You: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2000).

44 Mark Greene, *The Great Divide* (London: LICC, 2010).

45 Schreiter, "From the Lausanne Covenant."

### 3.2.1 CC Part I—For the Lord We Love: the Cape Town Confession of Faith

After setting out the Father's and Son's roles, the Commitment affirms the Creator Spirit's biblical role (in point 5):

- A. We Love God the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament we see the Spirit of God active in creation, in works of liberation and justice, and in filling and empowering people for every kind of service. Spirit-filled prophets looked forward to the coming King and Servant, whose person and work would be endowed with God's Spirit.<sup>46</sup>
- B. At Pentecost God poured out his Holy Spirit as promised by the prophets and by Jesus. The sanctifying Spirit produces ... fruit in the lives of believers ... [and em]powers [them] for mission and ... works of service including everyday work. Work and mission are of the Spirit.
- C. ... This is true of mission in all its dimensions: evangelism, bearing witness to the truth, discipling, peace-making, social engagement, ethical transformation, caring for creation, overcoming evil powers ....

This is an all-embracing missiology. We can debate, as the Padillas—father René and daughter Ruth Padilla du Borst—did with John Piper, as to what extent the powers are supernatural or social structures; but each aspect needs to be taken seriously, as above,<sup>47</sup> in workplace mission, as Stott, Keller, Newbigin and company have done.

Point 7, titled “We love God’s world,” focuses on “the world of God’s creation created, sustained and redeemed by Christ.” It includes the creation commission and integral mission through missional callings:

- (A) ... We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources ... for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth ... we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility. We support Christians

46 Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization. “The Cape Town Commitment.” <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment>. Accessed 28 March 2021.

47 The priority of spiritual, vertical reconciliation and evangelism was presumed by conservative exegete Piper's keynote on Ephesians 3. He critiqued Latino theologian and Rene Padilla's daughter Ruth Padilla deBorst's exegesis of Ephesians 2. She had stressed Christ's breaking down dividing walls of hostility (Eph. 2.14; cf. Gal. 3.28) ruled by principalities and powers, including spiritual and social structures, e.g., racism and sexism. Piper ignored this horizontal dimension, stressing divine wrath against humanity's devilish captivity, awaiting salvation from apostolic-linked missionaries and ministers. The saints' “work of ministry,” of Ephesians 4.12, which word-ministries are meant “to equip for,” in social and spiritual spheres, was ignored, along with any both/and approach.

whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, [and] ... those committed to godly fulfilment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship....

Past Lausanne evangelism versus social concern tensions—seem settled in Cape Town (except for Piper's protests); "Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out ... the gospel," and does this through "the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual[s], ... society, *and* for creation." As this point asserts, "All three are broken; all three ... part of the comprehensive mission of God's people ... [where] in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences."

3.2.2 CC Part II: for the World We Serve: the Cape Town Call to Action  
The Introduction to Part II sets our work in Christ-centred cosmic context. "Our covenant with God binds love and obedience together." God rejoices to see our "work produced by faith" and our "labour prompted by love" (1 Thess. 1.3) for "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2.10).

Part IIA, "Bearing witness to the truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalized world" urges preaching of "the fullness of the biblical gospel ... in all its cosmic scope and truth ... as God's plan for the whole universe in Christ."

Part IIB, "Truth and the workplace" upholds the Workplace Network's perspective, stressing (in Point 3) that "[H]uman work [i]s part of God's good purpose in creation in the sphere of ministry, ... in different callings. By contrast, the falsehood of a 'sacred-secular divide' has permeated the Church's thinking and action.... But God is Lord of *all* of life." Here Wright robustly affirms fellow Stott successor Mark Greene's rejection of the sacred-secular divide as an obstacle to mission.

The CC goes even further:

In spite of the enormous evangelistic and transformational opportunity of ... workplace relationships with non-Christians, few churches ... equip their people to seize this. We have failed to regard work in itself as biblically and intrinsically significant, as we have failed to bring the whole of life under ... Christ.

Wright skilfully balances the instrumental evangelistic emphasis of the Manila Manifesto with affirmation of work's intrinsic and missional worth.

Further, Part IIB states:

We encourage all believers to ... affirm their own daily ministry and mission ... wherever God has called them to work.” And in 11C): We need to strategically and intensively “train all God’s people in whole-life discipleship ... from a biblical worldview ... with missional effectiveness in ... daily life and work.

Newbigin could not have put either statement better in his stress on lay training. Moreover, Point 7: “Truth and the public arenas,” uses similar language to Kuypers’ (and Newbigin’s) in referring to “spheres,” and Pauline “powers.” For instance: “The interlocking arenas of Government, Business and Academia have a strong influence on the values of each nation and ... define the freedom of the Church.”<sup>48</sup> (7A) encourages “Christ-followers to ... engage ... in these spheres, both in public service or private enterprise, ... to shape societal values and influence public debate.”

Point 7 (B) displays Lausanne’s generational focus, encouraging youth to challenge perversions of truth by corruption and relativism. Entrepreneurs should creatively challenge corrupt powers’ undermining of economic development and social cohesion. Further, 7 (C) challenges young Christian academics “to consider a long-term career in the secular university, to (i) teach and (ii) develop their discipline from a biblical worldview, to influence their ... field.”<sup>49</sup>

So we see in spheres like business, government and academia a clear Kuypersian and Newbigin influenced development in Evangelical use of the creation/cultural mandate along with missional intent and lay training and education.

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48 These three spheres are a recent focus for Lausanne. Business as Mission has grown hugely since 2004. But many in Lausanne and FAW reductively equate work with business alone. I come from a small business family, but believe that professions, public servants, trades, gig economy and other workers should not be slighted, lest another Ephesians 2.14 “dividing wall” be erected.

49 Academia has been a key Lausanne emphasis since 1974, with Stott’s strong links to the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) and his mentoring of key young global IFES leaders like Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar. Lindsay Brown, Lausanne International Director from the 2000s through to Cape Town 2010 had also led IFES. Despite important Sydney Anglican episcopal and Australian Radical Discipleship influences in Lausanne 1974, and Archbishop Glen Davies on its board, a narrower evangelistic influence on the Australian Fellowship of University Students (AFES) and IFES has under-prepared students for the workplace. Contrast this CC quote: “The Church can render no greater service to ... the gospel than ... to recapture the universities for Christ,” Charles Habib Malik, former president UN General Assembly, in his *A Christian Critique of the University* (Downers Grove: IVP), 1981.



#### 4 Lausanne Cape Town III and Today's Missional Workplace Challenges

Firstly, recapitulating themes from chapter 6, René Padilla's paper, and presentation with Samuel Escobar, rightly challenged Lausanne III to grasp the great mission challenges of radical discipleship (from Lausanne I), global poverty, and ecosystem destruction. They saw radical discipleship largely ignored by fellow Latinos, quoting Robinson Cavalcanti's observation "that if the rapture occurred today, it would take a whole week for people ... to realize that Protestant Christians were absent"—such was their invisibility in workplaces and society.<sup>50</sup> Hence insights from the Latin American Theological Fraternity are still needed lest we succumb to U.S. prosperity theology, ecological destruction, and a privatized Gospel.<sup>51</sup>

There was wonderful African worship and testimonies in Cape Town including African Enterprise's prophetic Michael Cassidy, but little mention made of many who had long worked in different spheres to stimulate the South African Mandela miracle of Apartheid's democratic demise. Further, Archbishop of Cape Town Desmond Tutu's key chairing role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, would have exemplified key Commitment themes like Truth-telling.

The South African stage's significance for racial, economic and workplace challenges was made clear in visits to Khayelitsha's two million strong shanty town and heroic, under-resourced community development projects. But South African Evangelical liberation theologian Clint le Bruyns from nearby Stellenbosch University was missing, though fortunately he spoke later at the 2019 Manila Global Workplace Forum platform. Sadly, Bosch and Newbigin, had died, and Stott could no longer come, all three having previously attended Lausanne events. They would likely have been impressed by the CC but saddened by opportunities lost above to illustrate its themes.

Second, Padilla lamented that the harvest laborers whom evangelicals exhort to go out (Matt. 9:38) are not equally exhorted to show Christ's shepherd-like, healing compassion for the poor and ill. However, Libby Little's story of her recently martyred dentist husband's last Bible Study about

50 C. René Padilla, "From Lausanne I to Lausanne III," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 5(2) 2010: 19–25.

51 Lausanne Movement, "A Statement on the Prosperity Gospel," <https://www.lausanne.org/content/a-statement-on-the-prosperity-gospel>; cf. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, "An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle (LOP 20)," Lausanne Occasional Paper 20. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-20>. Both accessed 28 March 2021.

a colleagues' 'beautiful' bloodied feet<sup>52</sup> and the team's professionally trained hands to bear healing good news to remote mountain peoples, exemplified such healing compassion. Poverty alleviation and workplace actions were also included in inspiring stories such as the Coptic redevelopment of a Cairo garbage dump.

The Millennium Development Goals and Micah Challenge featured in multiplexes, but not in main platform sessions. The same applied to the relative neglect of ecosystem destruction though another multiplex involved outstanding global workplace and scientific leader Sir John Houghton, first chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Though prominent in the Commitment, and some multiplexes, often the creation mandate was a great omission from platforms at Cape Town, ironically soon the first modern global city to run dry.

## 5 Conclusion: Every Sphere of Creation

In his Cape Town concluding address, International Director Lindsay Brown repeatedly stressed Lausanne's commitment to reaching all peoples and all spheres of society. He cited the favourite Kuyper quote of many workplace mission advocates: "There is not one square inch of the universe over which Jesus does not say 'This is mine'."<sup>53</sup>

The Lausanne Movement, like evangelicalism itself, is a broad movement. Its informal nature, and the tensions within the Lausanne Covenant Articles 5 on radical discipleship and social responsibility and article 6 on the priority of proclamation evangelism, make it a sometimes vexed, but vital movement. It also has occasional tensions between its still largely North American business funding, and the vitality, poverty and diversity of its mainly Global South attendees' lives and work.

The theological tensions of the Covenant, while modified by Stott and co., were and are replicated in relation to those prioritising one or other of the three key biblical commissions/mandates (creation commission of the Father, Great Commission of the Son and great commandment through the Holy Spirit) and playing favourites with the missional nature and primary work of these persons of the economic Trinity in credal terms. To return to chapter 6, while that triologue of three trinitarian-based commissions within the later (from 2004) Lausanne tradition, and between it and missional and ecumenical

52 "Embracing Suffering in Service" in <https://www.lausanne.org/content/a-small-version-of-the-grand-narrative>.

53 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thelausannemovement/5117386510>.

churches continues, it can still be a creative and “vital” tradition. Thankfully, the CC provides a more balanced, mature triune framework for and commitment to integral workplace mission.

Chapter 6 also explored the global Lausanne Movement and tradition exploring tensions between the Lausanne Covenant’s key architect Stott and leading missional theologian Bosch, arguing that they were not as different as Bosch thought. Chapter 18 has, instead of Bosch for dialogue, his co-founder in the Missional Church movement, Newbigin. Newbigin’s ecumenical background—but with a Reformed, trinitarian, sphere-sovereignty based missional church and work-affirming perspective—has had a key bridging effect. It is fruitful for overcoming some of the mutual isolation of Missional Church and FAW movements, including within Lausanne. Pattaya 2004 and Cape Town 2010’s Commitments integrated trinitarian theology, and robust rejection of the sacred–secular divide where work was seen as secular and secondary. It did this partly through Kuyper’s and Newbigin’s Reformed creation mandate and sovereign spheres as the stage for Christ’s true and servant-like dominion to be displayed globally and gloriously.

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# Co-Creation and Work in an Increasingly Technological World

*Victoria Lorrimar*

## Abstract

Our understanding of and capacity for work is being transformed by emerging human enhancement technologies. Developments in Genetic, Robotic, Information and Nanotechnologies (GRIN) may impact the type of work that we do, and our ability to do it. David Bosch's Ministry for the Whole People of God missiological paradigm is taken as a starting point for reflecting theologically on work, but requires additional resources to engage the increasingly technological nature of work. Accordingly, this chapter explores theological understandings of humans as 'co-creators' with God who are generally optimistic about the role that technology might play in our human vocation, and outlines some of the principles that should guide a responsible engagement with the technologies that are impacting our work practices. Additionally, these technologies have implications for justice, premised as they often are on a notion of human flourishing that overlooks much of the majority world and will only serve to increase inequality. Critiquing the visions of human flourishing that underlie various enhancement proposals, the chapter considers ways in which flourishing might properly be construed in a missiological sense to enable us to 're-faith' our work in an increasingly technological world.

## Keywords

Mission – technology – co-creation – vocation – flourishing – human enhancement

## 1 Introduction

What does it mean to be a faithful Christian in the workplace? This is not a new question, but one that individual believers and the church as a whole must ask again and again as the nature of work itself shifts over time. Our understanding of work, in some parts of the world at least, is undergoing a radical overhaul

in response to rapid technological progress. Of course, technological progress is hardly a new concept, but the specific focus here will be on what we might categorize as ‘enhancement’ technologies—technologies specifically aimed at improving human capabilities in some way. These technologies include Genetic, Robotic, Information and Nanotechnologies (GRIN), and their development may impact the type of work that we do, and our ability to do it.

The technological transformation of work is garnering interest economically and scientifically.<sup>1</sup> Work is understood in a broad sense here as the activities that comprise our vocation, including but not restricted to our traditional notions of employment and the workplace. What kinds of changes might be brought about by these technologies? Perhaps they will do away with large swaths of what we consider ‘work’ at present altogether as menial tasks are relegated to a robotic underclass. Or a greater proportion of work will be associated with developing prospective enhancement technologies, or these technologies might be used to improve our capacity for work, or create types of work that we cannot imagine presently. Though unable to predict the particulars of future work with certainty, it is clear that artificial intelligence (AI) will be more prominent; that some people will be directly involved in its creation while even more will work alongside some form of AI.<sup>2</sup> The focus here is not on specific technologies, however, but rather how to make sense of them in the context of our work and our mission as Christians.

How might we reflect theologically on these emerging technologies and the changes they herald for the workplace and our thinking about human vocation? To begin with, a certain amount of pragmatism is called for: technology is continually ‘progressing’ and theologians must acknowledge this even if they critique its application, or underlying assumptions. A fear-driven response that reflexively rejects all enhancement technologies as ‘playing God’ from the outset is unproductive and closes down debate prematurely. Theology is well placed to speak into questions surrounding the future of work by offering a positive vision, a picture of what the good life looks like and what it means to flourish from a Christian perspective.

A Christian picture of flourishing is centered on the ideas of mission and vocation. In sketching out such a vision, this chapter uses David Bosch’s landmark work in missiology as a starting point for thinking through how a contemporary understanding of vocation might properly be construed in terms of *missio Dei*. Bosch’s paradigm of mission of Ministry by the Whole People

1 Emile Anthes, “The Shape of Work to Come,” *Nature* 550 (2017): 316–320.

2 For a treatment of this question see Nigel, M. de S. Cameron, *Will Robots Take Your Job?: A Plea for Consensus* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

of God, with its broad conception of mission as an activity pertaining to all believers, offers a framework for thinking about faith and work, however the technological advances already mentioned render twentieth century missiological formulations less immediately relevant to today's context. 'Transforming Work' in light of these challenges will therefore require additional resources: here a broader notion of vocation and a theology of humans as co-creators are drawn on to develop Bosch's missiological proposal in service of a contemporary *missio Dei*.

## 2 The Field of God's Mission

Let us begin with a brief exposition of Bosch's Ministry by the Whole People of God paradigm. For Bosch, the church's conception of mission has been overhauled; no longer is mission the prerogative of *missionaries* sent to a foreign mission field. Rather, 'the whole world is a mission field' and mission is a task pertaining to the whole church.<sup>3</sup> Bosch charts the historical emergence of this view in the ecumenical movement of the 1960s, demonstrating the dangers of equating mission too closely with a worldly, humanitarian agenda. "The church was a kind of spiritual gas station from which all and sundry could draw the energy for a great variety of worthwhile projects".<sup>4</sup> This approach was course-corrected in the 1970s, through the recognition of the church's dual orientation; not only to the world in mission but also toward God in worship and prayer. The church maintains its unique character for the sake of the world.<sup>5</sup>

This background sets the stage for Bosch's own presentation of mission as *missio Dei*. He follows the Barthian trajectory that would locate mission within the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than ecclesiology or soteriology. Bosch's summary of this shift is helpful: "The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world."<sup>6</sup>

3 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 390.

4 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.

5 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 395.

6 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 399.



Supporting Bosch's analysis, Roger Haight captures this reversal of understanding in the order of church and mission:

God takes the initiative; logically and chronologically the mission is prior to the church. The church took shape around the originating impulse of God in Jesus toward the kingdom of God in history and finds its *raison d'être* in continuing to mediate God's empowerment and supply the social basis for this mission.<sup>7</sup>

As Emil Brunner famously declared, "The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning."<sup>8</sup> Contemporary missiologist Kirsteen Kim highlights the role of the Spirit in particular in her presentation of the church as "always and everywhere missionary," existing both theologically and empirically as a result of mission.<sup>9</sup>

Bosch cautions against the tendency to treat *missio Dei* with too much latitude, however, highlighting its problematic usage in some instances to do away with a need for the church entirely.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the treating of mission within a *missio Dei* framework represents a breakthrough, in his view, and underpins his own depiction of mission as "ministry by the whole people of God."<sup>11</sup> He calls for a theology of the laity, challenging both the enshrining of ordained ministry by various church traditions and the Enlightenment distinction between public and private life.<sup>12</sup>

The understanding of the church as a part of God's mission, rather than mission as one of the activities of the church (among many), as well as the move toward a theology of the laity, reconfigures how members of the church think of vocation. Whatever work the Christian does is *missional* by virtue of their belonging to the church, and therefore their participation in the work of *missio Dei*. While the whole activity of the church is rightly construed as mission, we

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7 Roger Haight, *Ecclesial Existence: Christian Community in History*, vol. 3 (New York: Continuum, 2008), 106.

8 Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM, 1931), 108.

9 Kirsteen Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission* (London: SCM, 2010), 282.

10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 402.

11 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

12 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 484.

should heed Lesslie Newbigin's warning that this dimension of the church's life may be neglected or even lost without an intentional focus on mission.<sup>13</sup>

### 3 The Nature of Mission

So if the church is a part of God's mission, what is the nature of this mission? Bosch warns against the danger of labelling every activity as mission, and appeals to the major salvific events narrated by the New Testament (incarnation, cross, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and the *parousia*) in sketching the contours of an appropriate missiology.<sup>14</sup> Overwhelmingly, the theme emerging from Bosch's constructive missiology is that the church's calling is to witness to the hope and promise realized in Christ, embodying God's reign in the present.<sup>15</sup> "The *missio Dei* purifies the church," reconfiguring mission as far more than particular activities aimed at "conversion, church growth, the reign of God, economy, society, and politics" and defining it as no less than "the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus".<sup>16</sup>

Though much of Bosch's work, paradigmatic in missiological studies, focuses on a critique of earlier models of mission and a history of their development in the context of ecumenism, his final constructive proposal of mission is extremely broad. He sets the stage for a contemporary theology of mission built on the foundation of *missio Dei*, and centered around the laity (i.e. the *whole* church) rather than the chosen few 'missionaries'. Having adopted the Kuhnian paradigm shift as a framework for exploring missiological history, he identifies an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm.

We might therefore pick up where Bosch left off, fleshing out the framework of *missio Dei* and an engaged laity with the help of some other recent theological developments. A transformational hermeneutic will continue to understand mission as ministry by the whole people of God, but will consider what this means specifically for work in a world markedly different to the one experienced by Bosch. How might a Boschian model mature to incorporate new dimensions of work?

As mission in churches has historically been synonymous with cross-cultural or overseas mission, the centrality of mission in a more holistic sense to the church's identity might be more fruitfully treated in conjunction with vocation.

13 Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World* (London: IMC, 1960), 43.

14 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 523–30.

15 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 524.

16 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 531–32.

Vocation is not a new idea, indeed, we might find some helpful insights in the 1981 encyclical *Laborem exercens*, issued by Pope John Paul II, focused on the significance of human work. The encyclical calls for the development of a spirituality of work as a particular task for the church, and conceives of work as a sharing in the activity of the Creator.<sup>17</sup> The goal of this spirituality of work is to “help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King.”<sup>18</sup>

Here we see the idea of human work connected with participation in God's mission, as manifested in the threefold office of Christ, a link that clearly supports Bosch's understanding of *missio Dei* and its implications for human action.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, work is sharing in the activity of the *Creator*—that is, through our work we are involved in some way in divine creation. Though the encyclical does not use that specific terminology, it presents an account of human activity that might broadly be categorized under the heading of ‘co-creation’.

#### 4 Flourishing through Co-creation

‘Co-creation’ can be a vague term, its usage and interpretation ranges from a synonym to stewardship to a near equal partnership with God.<sup>20</sup> Acknowledging the potential for misinterpretation, co-creation is used here as a theological term that attributes a role to humans in ongoing creation, both distinct from and subordinate to God's work of creation. Co-creation may be contrasted with a notion of humans as merely vehicles or passive recipients of God's creation. Co-creation theologies have been put forward by thinkers focused on the arts and literature (e.g. J. R. R. Tolkien, Trevor Hart) and the sciences (e.g. Arthur Peacocke and Philip Hefner).<sup>21</sup>

17 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (Vatican City: Vatican, 1981), §24–25.

18 John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, §24.

19 The 1965 *Apostolicam Actuositatem* encyclical even more explicitly connects the threefold office with the work of the laity, supporting Bosch's proposal of mission as the Ministry by the Whole People of God (Paul V, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Vatican City: Vatican, 1965), §10).

20 Anna Case-Winters, “Rethinking the Image of God,” *Zygon* 39(4) (2004): 821.

21 Note that only Peacocke and Hefner use the specific term “co-creation” (Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science: The Bampton Lectures 1978* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 304; Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 27).

Trevor Hart treats human making within the context of a doctrine of creation, suggesting that we view creation as “a project divinely begun and established, yet one that is handed over to us with ‘more to be made of it yet.’”<sup>22</sup> After an exploration of the biblical portrayal of God as divine artist, Hart concludes that “at various key points in the story of God’s creative fashioning of a world fit for [God’s] own indwelling with us, divine artistry actively solicits a corresponding creaturely creativity, apart from which the project cannot and will not come to fruition.”<sup>23</sup> Lest this be interpreted with hubris, however, Hart situates that conclusion within a broader examination of how our understanding of artistry has shifted under Renaissance and Enlightenment thought. Craft-personship, as we understand it now, is in some ways a more helpful term. God is the master craftsperson, with humans analogous to the apprentice in the master’s workshop. In such an analogy, “the existence of certain established limits or boundaries is to the fore: there are considerations of authority and obedience to be observed, traditional ways of working with which faith must be kept, accepted standards of excellence to be acknowledged and pursued.”<sup>24</sup> Within this context, though, genuine freedom and ingenuity operate, nurtured and schooled within the Master’s domain.<sup>25</sup> The ‘otherness’ of God must not be undermined in the analogy of human creativity to divine.<sup>26</sup>

An understanding of humans as co-creators sees creativity as a fundamental feature of human existence. We flourish when we exercise our creativity in alignment with God’s purposes. The danger of labelling everything as mission and effectively rendering the concept meaningless is mitigated with this intentional focus on flourishing that gives shape to our work. If we understand mission as central to our purpose, and we at the same time recognize our role as co-creators, and the real responsibility this entails, then our work is intentional toward this end.

Michael Amaladoss invokes the idea of co-creation as part of an eschatological framing of mission that resonates with Bosch’s identified emerging paradigm.<sup>27</sup> Writing at the same time as Bosch, he also foreshadows an impending

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Tolkien uses the terminology of ‘sub-creation’ and Hart presents a similar notion (Hart, *Making Good: Creation, Creativity, and Artistry* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” in *Tree and Leaf* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 1–81.

22 Trevor Hart, *Making Good*, 8.

23 Hart, *Making Good*, 8.

24 Hart, *Making Good*, 43.

25 Hart, *Making Good*, 43.

26 Hart, *Making Good*, 21.

27 Michael Amaladoss, “New World, New Creation—Mission in Power and Faith,” *Mission Studies* 8(1) (1991), 143.

shift, a future filled with unforeseen cultural and social transformation.<sup>28</sup> Amaladoss recognizes the likely technological nature of the emerging paradigm, and, though he does not develop the concept further, the co-creation metaphor can contribute to the transformational hermeneutic required to transform work and mission in our contemporary context.

## 5 Technologies within Mission

How does co-creation apply specifically to the increasingly technological nature of human work? Hart does not include technology in his representation of creativity, focusing mainly on the arts, though he acknowledges its broader application to other human activities. Although God alone bestows existence upon creatures, other biblically attested activities that require our participation for creation's completion are also included in the rubric of creation: "planning, making, shaping, forming, developing, and so on."<sup>29</sup> Technology is a legitimate expansion of this understanding of human making. *Laborum exercens* names technology as an ally as "man [sic.] in a sense continues to develop [the Creator's] activity". Technological innovation is one of the means in which we contribute to the ongoing creation, an activity that comes naturally to us.

Technologies can be employed to various ends, however, and are supported by a particular vision of what the good life is (occasionally acknowledged, but more often implicit). These underlying visions of flourishing require probing and exposing if we are to build a robust moral discourse around the development and employment of enhancement technologies. A detailed exposition of the various notions of the good life operative in the debate over human enhancement is beyond the present scope;<sup>30</sup> a brief introduction of human flourishing according to the transhumanism movement is offered here to highlight the contrast with the Christian perspective that will be presented below.

Transhumanism is a philosophy that lies at the extreme end of advocacy for human technological enhancement, promoting the improvement of the human condition and the overcoming of present limitations by technological

<sup>28</sup> Amaladoss, "New World, New Creation," 135.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Laborum Exercens*, §5.

<sup>30</sup> See Michael Burdett and Victoria Lorrimar, "Creatures Bound for Glory: Biotechnological Enhancement and Visions of Human Flourishing," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32(2), 2019: 241–53. Victoria Lorrimar, "Human Flourishing, Joy, and the Prospect of Radical Life Extension," *The Expository Times* 129(12) (2018): 554–61.

means.<sup>31</sup> While the particular emphases and technologies vary among proponents, transhumanists tend to subscribe to an implicit view of the good life that sees humans as authors of their own destiny. The good life is *engineered*. Christina Bieber Lake describes the inadequate vision of human flourishing underlying transhumanist thought:

transhumanism offers a false path to the good life. Transhumanism is wrong not because it promotes change, but because it promotes a dangerously thin definition of the good life, as if to be healthier, have a longer life, or experience less suffering will necessarily amount to a better life.<sup>32</sup>

The ends to which technology is employed in transhumanist thought are essentially “a rejection of thousands of years of philosophical and theological thinking about what constitutes the highest and best life available to human beings”.<sup>33</sup>

That human flourishing is linked with human becoming is a shared commitment between Christianity and transhumanism. Both transhumanists and Christians acknowledge some form of the ‘human predicament’, the sense that humanity is not presently all that it could be. How does a Christian understand of the good life differ? With respect to the means (and often the form) of the transformation in which they hope. Where transhumanists see a disease (present human limitations) that can be cured with technology, Christians hope for a healing and salvation which they cannot achieve by their own efforts alone.

What does human flourishing look like for the Christian? Miroslav Volf premises his vision of human flourishing from a Christian perspective on the claim that “the right kind of love for the right kind of God bathes our world in the light of transcendent glory and turns it into a theatre of joy”.<sup>34</sup> This understanding of flourishing has an activist dimension according to Volf (we could

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31 Nick Bostrom, “The Transhumanist FAQ: A General Introduction (Version 2.1),” *World Transhumanist Association* (2003), <http://www.nickbostrom.com/views/transhumanist.pdf>, 4. Accessed 28 July 2022. While transhumanism is extreme, it nevertheless represents views toward technology that are ubiquitous in less pronounced forms. For a general theological engagement with transhumanism, see Ronald Cole-Turner, ed., *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).

32 Christina Bieber Lake, *Prophets of the Posthuman: American Fiction, Biotechnology, and the Ethics of Personhood*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 172.

33 Lake, *Prophets of the Posthuman*, xii.

34 Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 206.

perhaps substitute activism for mission here); it is oriented toward the future.<sup>35</sup> But at the same time, though it anticipates and works toward transcending our present circumstances, it also acknowledges the goodness inherent in the limitations of creaturehood. If we pursue this kind of flourishing, we will be participating in God's mission.

Might enhancement technologies find a place in this vision of flourishing, or in a contemporary missiology? Could they be appropriate forms of co-creation? Ted Peters, for example, suggests that as Christians are called to envision a better future, they must 'keep the door open' to the possibility of human technological enhancement and endeavour to be good stewards of these emerging technologies.<sup>36</sup> Reflecting on and using enhancement technologies through the lens of a Christian understanding of flourishing offers an alternative approach to transhumanist reductionism. We see this in some of the more positive theological engagements with co-creation and technology. Jason Roberts, for example, articulates four guiding principles for future created co-creation: (1) the distinction between our biocultural and eschatological futures, (2) an understanding of humans and the good works they do as both wholly natural and mediators of grace, (3) a resistance to the transhumanist view that death ought to be defeated, and (4) an acknowledgment that human freedom is finite and fallible.<sup>37</sup>

What we learn on careful reflection is that the various 'enhancement' technologies imagined, though they may impact the work we do in the future significantly, do not constitute an entirely novel theological anthropology, and therefore do not necessitate an entirely novel missiology. Bosch's framework, developed in a different time, requires expanding, but not replacing. God remains the same *missio Dei*, even as our understanding of what that means develops as we engage new challenges in our theological reflection.

By thinking about enhancement technologies within the context of the *missio Dei* we are released from the requirement or impulse to develop a prescriptive, propositional approach to technological assessment. Brian Brock reminds us that the Christian gospel "reveals as good news human ingenuity and the richness of creation's given material order, insisting that the two can come together in the creation of good and beneficial techniques and mechanical

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35 Miroslav Volf, "The Crown of the Good Life: A Hypothesis," in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture and the Good Life*, edited by Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 132.

36 Ted Peters, *Playing God? Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom*. 2nd edn. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 2, 146.

37 Jason Roberts, "'Fill and Subdue?' Imaging God in New Social and Ecological Contexts," *Zygon* 50(1) (2015): 57–59.

artefacts”.<sup>38</sup> In making this statement he affirms two basic claims: that human collaboration with God’s work can compete with mixed motives in a world that is still being redeemed, but also that we are freed from “the burden of ensuring that God triumphs over the powers of this age”.<sup>39</sup>

Thinking of human enhancement technologies within the context of our vocation as co-creators, but also our calling to embody God’s reign in the present, as Bosch construes mission,<sup>40</sup> will leave room for discernment over specific technologies, but will also offer some clear direction when it comes to the appropriate goals for their use in human work. We might consider the justice implications of enhancement technologies as an example.

Many prospective enhancement technologies are premised on a notion of human flourishing that overlooks much of the majority world and will only serve to increase existing inequalities.<sup>41</sup> Viewed through the lenses of Christian vocation and *missio Dei*, however, any application of technology that will lead to injustice is ruled out. A Christian vision of flourishing will instead seek to reduce and eradicate inequalities, rather than prioritizing the individual desires and wellbeing of the privileged few.

To give a more specific example, Christians might attend to insights from the field of disability studies in their discernment around enhancement and amplify these voices in the public square. In contrast to transhumanist arguments that justice requires the enhancement of human capabilities,<sup>42</sup> disability studies aim to expose the misconstruing of disabled bodies. Tobin Siebers describes the field:

Disability studies does not treat disease or disability, hoping to cure or avoid them; it studies the social meanings, symbols, and stigmas attached to disability identity and asks how they relate to enforced systems of exclusion and oppression, attacking the widespread belief that having an able body and mind determines whether one is a quality human being.<sup>43</sup>

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38 Brian Brock, *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 381.

39 Brock, *Christian Ethics*, 380–381.

40 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 524.

41 Tom Shakespeare, “Foreword” in *The Human Enhancement Debate and Disability: New Bodies for a Better Life*, edited by Miriam Eilers, Katrin Grüber, and Christoph Rehmann-Sutter (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), XII.

42 Julian Savulescu, “Justice, Fairness, and Enhancement,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (2006); James Hughes, *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future* (Cambridge MA: Westview, 2004).

43 Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 3–4.



Siebers further argues that disability “often comes to stand for the precariousness of the human condition, for the fact that individual human beings are susceptible to change, decline over time, and die”.<sup>44</sup> This is entirely opposed to the transhumanist endeavour, and thus disability accounts are an important check to particular visions of the technological future. While some within the disability community welcome ‘enhancement’, others see it as a misguided solution.<sup>45</sup> Many with firsthand experience of particular conditions that would be targeted for eradication with biotechnology attest to the value of the ‘impairments’, arguing that human experience overall would be diminished without these atypical experiences.

Furthermore, a transformative missional hermeneutic applied to the concept of work and technology would be negligent if it did not also attend to myriad forms of unpaid labour most often involved in caring for the young, the ill, and the elderly and maintaining family and household affairs. This responsibility has overwhelmingly fallen to women, and even where it has been outsourced as paid work it is generally poorly remunerated and leads to precarious employment situations.<sup>46</sup> While AI and robots are touted as the solution to these burdens of care, they present a range of other ethical question to consider around personhood and dignity.

This trajectory in thinking about technology and work theologically can be traced in theological developments after Bosch’s missiological analysis and predictions were published. Whereas *Laborum exercens*, contemporaneous with much of Bosch’s work, spoke of technology as an ‘ally’, Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* is more attentive to the moral implications and calls for a renewed focus on justice as we reflect on technology.<sup>47</sup> Though it continues to recognize technology as the product of a God-given human creativity, a large portion of the encyclical deals with the ‘technocratic paradigm’ that has proven destructive in so many ways for the whole of creation.<sup>48</sup> Yet the value of technology is not rejected altogether; instead, as with Bosch, a new paradigm is called for, where technology “put at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral.”<sup>49</sup> This foregrounding of flourishing and consideration of the ends exemplifies the kind

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44 Siebers, *Disability Theory*, 5.

45 Shakespeare, “Foreword,” IX.

46 For a meta-analysis, see Rachel Connelly and Ebru Kongar, eds, *Gender and Time Use in a Global Context: The Economics of Employment and Unpaid Labor* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

47 Francis, *Laudato Si’* (Vatican City: Vatican, 2015), ch 3.

48 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §102.

49 Francis, *Laudato Si’*, §112.

of transformational hermeneutic advocated by Bosch, even as it represents its maturation.

## 6 Conclusion

This exploration of mission has focused on how Christians conceive of their work, particularly in light of emerging technologies and the changes they herald. But the question of what the good life looks like is one that all people (consciously or unconsciously) compose an answer to, so it is worth thinking about the implications of this discussion beyond the scope of the church. While explicit talk of *missio Dei* is unlikely to capture much interest in the public sphere, the language of co-creation may fare better. James McClendon spoke of the need for theology to enter the “tournament of narratives,”<sup>50</sup> and the construction of an alternative vision of future existence that is every bit as compelling as some of the technological ideals will equip Christianity for this arena. The conversation around the good life is a broad one, a context in which the church can make a valuable contribution.

This is true co-creation—the invitation to partner with God in God’s mission. Whether we use the language of redemption, the consummation of God’s kingdom, the new creation, or union with God; all of these and more are encompassed in the *denouement* of the gospel story. We need not fear the changes that various human enhancement technologies might present for our understanding of work; the Christian vocation remains the same. We continue to embody God’s reign in the present; even as our understanding of *missio Dei* expands to engage the specific contours of work in the 21st century. This constitutes a maturing Ministry for the Whole People of God; as all dimensions of work are likely to be affected by technological developments to some degree, all people are invited to participate in God’s mission in whatever work they find themselves doing.

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<sup>50</sup> James McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Oxford: Abingdon, 1986), 143.

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# Beyond Boredom: Being Human in a Post-Work World

*Brian Harris and Jon Bergmann*

## Abstract

As Christian theology turns its attention to the intersection of faith, work, and the theology of vocation, social commentators such as Noah Yuval Harari are predicting that by 2050 we could see the widespread emergence of what Harari calls the ‘useless class’—a large number of people without use to the workforce as a result of advances in AI.<sup>1</sup> With no shortage of cheaply produced goods, humanity may well transition from a world of paid employment to one where a Universal Basic Income is available and leisure is the new normal. This chapter explores some key concerns for a post-work world, the missiological implications of each being close to the surface:

- What can we make of human *being* when technology begins to do our relational work for us?
- What narrative will move us forward in a world where work no longer satisfies our need for purpose?
- Is it theologically responsible to be *Transforming* work if the future of work is in question, or could this lead to large scale disenchantment with faith itself?

This intentionally provocative essay does not interrogate whether Harari’s claims are likely to prove accurate—noting that Harari himself admits that he is not a prophet—but it is a serious exploration of what the future might look like if humanity continues along Harari’s predicted technological trajectory. It invites the church and its missiologists to be on the front foot and to imagine possible future worlds. They might never come to pass, but since part of the genius of the Christian faith is its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, this is a call to be prophetic, predictive and to engage our imaginations as we look to the future.

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1 Yuval Noah Harari is a popular historian, philosopher and futurist. Over 27 million copies of his books have been sold and they have been translated into 60 different languages. We interact with his thought at several points in this paper.

## 1 Crossing Boundaries and the *Missio Dei*

Missiologist David Bosch has succinctly noted that “Mission has to do with the crossing of frontiers.”<sup>2</sup> While at times these frontiers are geographic, they are often cultural and experiential. The work of Christian mission includes exploring the boundaries that separate us from a life lived fully alive, one which the Christian faith is convinced must be oriented around the person and work of Jesus Christ. St Irenaeus, a second century Bishop of Lyons, famously expressed this in words often translated, “the glory of God is a human being fully alive.”<sup>3</sup>

Volf and Croasmun attempt an interesting framing of *missio Dei* by claiming that “Christian theology shouldn’t be mainly about God because the mission of God isn’t mainly about God.”<sup>4</sup> Exploring Aquinas’ thoughts on happiness and flourishing, Volf argues that “the claim that the ultimate human end is God alone stands in unresolvable tension with Thomas’ conviction that in the world to come humans will enjoy not only the vision of God, but also communion with one another, and they will do so as bodily beings.”<sup>5</sup> This shifts the focus of the *missio Dei* away from a narrowly evangelistic frame and points to a Christian mission large enough to encompass the whole people of God, in multiple spheres and realms.

In this light it becomes important to frame the work of Christian mission in terms of frontier or boundary crossing and paradigm shifts. Where once the focus of mission was on crossing geographic boundaries—reaching those in remote or unevangelized areas—in an increasingly globalized world the emphasis has expanded to include dimensions of time, technology and culture. Put simply, our missiological focus must consider how phenomena such as an evolving technological landscape, instability in the workforce, shifts in accepted ethical frameworks in relation to sexuality and gender, and a myriad of other cultural and political changes will impact our experience of what it means to be human.

Bosch has outlined an ecumenical paradigm which claims that the focus of mission is on shifting paradigms. He claims that a kind of “theological schizophrenia” is produced from “the transition from one paradigm to another.”<sup>6</sup>

2 David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1980), 17.

3 St Irenaeus.

4 Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2019), 13.

5 Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World*, 67.

6 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 188.

For Bosch, these shifts are not abrupt, although global events in the modern era such as the COVID-19 pandemic may well prove Bosch wrong as inevitable technological shifts impact on the dynamics of human relationship and work. Bosch does, however, claim that “the Christian church in general and the Christian mission in particular are today confronted with issues they have never even dreamt of.”<sup>7</sup> The challenge for theologians exploring the *missio Dei* in the modern world is how to understand the human condition against the backdrop of such rapid and fundamental changes.

One change that will dramatically impact the human condition involves the way in which people engage in meaningful work. For the purposes of this chapter work is defined as paid employment, however it is acknowledged that there is more to work than receiving a wage and that much meaningful work is never remunerated. As automation and augmentation continue to become prominent features in an increasingly technological world, consideration must be given to the impact this will have not simply on the capacity of humans to continue working, but on people’s ability to draw meaning from the work that they do. While many books on Christian mission—this one included—rightly focus on including the whole people of God in the work of the *missio Dei*, the question this chapter asks is: how will humans construct meaning if they are unable to work in the same way they always have? How might people begin to engage with a *theology of leisure* in an emerging post-work world, where leisure is the primary mechanism for meaning-making? If our conversations around transforming work are to reach maturation, then it is critical to reflect theologically and missiologically on the future of work and leisure, and their impact on human purpose.

While the claims of a post-work world might on the surface seem like the fantasies of a utopian paradise, there are already murmurings of a new world being born. Change is an inevitable part of being human and is therefore of great interest to missiology.

## 2 A New Day

Phyllis Tickle has postulated that about every 500 years the church faces a major time of upheaval, the collapse of Rome in 476 being one such time, the Great Schism of 1054 another, the Reformation of 1517 yet another. Tickle suggests that in the early stages of this third millennium, we face the possibility

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<sup>7</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 189.

of a Great Emergence, a time when the Church gets to review her mission in the world and consider what is essential to her call and being.<sup>8</sup> Tickle likens it to a great rummage sale, when family members argue amongst themselves as to what can be dispensed with, and what sold off. While one could argue that Tickle's 500-year divisions are slightly forced, there is little doubt that this is a time when the Church is reconsidering how its mission should work its way out in this changing landscape.

This is especially valid when it comes to the world of work, where dramatic technological advances are likely to make previously secure career paths vulnerable and fragile. Some jobs are obviously in danger. Experimentation with driverless cars is now well advanced. Once perfected, the resulting job losses will be enormous. However, it is also previously prestigious jobs that will be at risk—or will be dramatically altered. Consider how accurately what was previously simply a watch can now monitor the wearer's pulse rate, sleep patterns, calorie consumption and an increasing number of other health indicators. It is only a matter of time until a watch will provide both more accurate information on health, and more sensible suggestions on how to improve it, than many doctors. This is hardly surprising, for a watch can monitor the user's health every second of the day, while a doctor often only sees a patient for ten minutes a year. We might therefore need fewer doctors, and those who retain their jobs, are likely to find the work they do to be very different.

While it is fair to ask if we will be able to create enough new jobs to replace those which will be lost by the advances in technology, probably the more pertinent question is whether it will be possible to create jobs that humans are capable of performing more efficiently than their AI counterpart. It is not just that our new creations can do the work we currently do, but that they will probably do it far better than we can.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, there is the possibility that we might face a world without work, or a world with work for only a few. Historian and philosopher Yuval Noah Harari has argued that “By 2050 a new class of people might emerge—the useless class. People who are not just unemployed, but unemployable.”<sup>10</sup>

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8 Phyllis A. Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Ada: Baker, 2012).

9 Victoria Lorrimar, “Co-Creation and Work in an Increasingly Technological World,” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

10 Yuval Noah Harari, “The Meaning of Life in a World without Work,” *The Guardian* (8 May 2017). <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/08/virtual-reality-religion-robots-sapiens-book>. Accessed 19 June 2022.



Harari intends the term ‘the useless class’ to be heard not as a moral judgement, but as a technical assessment. In his view, a large percentage of the human race will not be capable of producing or offering any service that a machine cannot do more effectively. From the point of view of production, they will be humans who have no useful task or service to offer. While in the past this would have heralded enormous suffering and the threat of starvation, this is now less likely to be the case. Advances in production mean that there will be more than enough for all, and there is a real chance that a Universal Basic Income (a basic living stipend provided to all without means testing and with no work requirement) will be globally available.<sup>11</sup>

If this scenario does indeed come about, Harari asks the pertinent question: “When humankind possesses enormous new powers, and when the threat of famine, plague and war is finally lifted, what will we do with ourselves? What will the scientists, investors, bankers and presidents do all day? Write poetry?”<sup>12</sup>

The irony of this should not be missed. This is a volume exploring the missiology of work just as futurists such as Harari are suggesting that in the relatively near future there might be no workplace to transform, or if there is, the workplace will be a significantly shrunken version of what currently exists. In many ways the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, sped up these shifts as entire sections of the global workforce moved their operations to home offices or digital locations, reliant on the array of technologies on offer. This shift from a physical workplace to a digital one has raised many questions about the nature of working life and its possible integration with family and leisure. However, even if there are no work vocations to transform, humans are always engaged in the task of meaning-making. The missiological question then becomes: “How might we find meaning in a post-work world?”

Bosch’s notion that paradigm shifts create a gradually emerging theological schizophrenia may well be accurate but a remedy for the dissonance comes via an honest evaluation of our cultural condition.

Gil Rendle’s book *Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World* argues that church leaders routinely underestimate the extent of the change they are facing, and therefore flirt with change, rather than

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11 This is a large claim, and its tentativeness is acknowledged. It is however worth noting that the first of the Millennium goals was to reduce the proportion of the world’s population living on less than \$1.25 a day by half by 2015, and that this goal was achieved 5 years ahead of time in 2010. Absolute poverty is declining. For further information see: <https://www.mdgmonitor.org/mdg-1-eradicate-poverty-hunger/>.

12 Harari, *Homo Deus*.

wholeheartedly embracing the new thinking required.<sup>13</sup> Rendle's insights are also valid when we think about the future of work. Here are three false assumptions Rendle suggests we challenge:

1. The assumption that we need renewal when we actually need transformation. In other words, we should avoid the risk of suggesting some tinkering in the workplace—renewing it by fighting for better hours or wages. We actually need to transform our thinking. What is life all about when it is not all about work? Maturation is thus transforming not just work but our view and perspective on work including life and society beyond work.
2. The assumption that we are facing a problem when we are actually facing a condition. Rendle notes that problems are to be solved, while conditions are to be lived with. If you break your leg, you have a problem, and with proper medical care, it is probably solvable. By contrast, if you have asthma, you have a condition that will not be solved and needs to be managed. When we speak of transforming vocation, we do not face a problem that can be solved. We face the ongoing dilemma of a maturation, the need to manage the constant tension between work as blessing and work as curse or work as creative delight and work as exploitation and dreariness. This tension needs to be managed, for it might never be solved. It could also be that the condition we manage is that work is for the few, and lengthy leisure is for the many, which would be a reversal of the historical norm.
3. The assumption that we know, when it is increasingly clear that we do not. Rendle notes that it was around the 15th century that map makers stopped filling their maps with slogans like “here there be dragons” and “there be the end of the world.” Instead, with honesty they left many blank spaces—noting simply that no one yet knew what was there. Unsurprisingly, it was a period when geographic knowledge surged ahead. Similarly, it is wise for us to note that given the rapid rate of technological advance, there are many areas where we must simply say, “we have no idea what the impact of this will be.” Maturation is thus transforming us by inviting us to be more observant and constructively responsive to what happens around us.

While we might view the potential demise of work as a threat, the new possibilities invite a maturation of humanity. While most people lament that they have so little discretionary time available, a more careful investigation tells a

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13 Gil Rendle, *Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World* (London: Rowan and Littlefield, 2018).

TABLE 20.1      Estimated Trend in the Lifetime Distribution of Discretionary Time, 1880–2040 USA<sup>14</sup>

Activity	1880	1995	2040
Lifetime Discretionary Hours	225,900	298,500	321,900
Lifetime Work Hours	182,100	122,400	75,900
Lifetime Leisure Hours	43,800	176,100	246,000

different tale. Robert Whaples has noted that in the 1800’s, the average worker in the USA worked over 70 hours per week. By the late twentieth century that had dropped to 39.2 hours per week.<sup>15</sup>

Robert Fogel reached even more startling conclusions. Given that we now work a significantly shorter week, and that average life expectancy has increased markedly, whereas in 1880 the average US worker would put in a total of 182 100 hours of work in their lifetime, and enjoy 43 800 hours of leisure, by 1995 lifetime work hours had dropped to 122 400 with leisure hours dramatically increased to 176 100. Fogel predicted that by 2040, lifetime work hours will be a historically paltry 75 900 and leisure hours will be a massive 246 000. Claims that this trend is elitist ignore that this is becoming widespread. While inevitably these figures represent a cross-section of western society, the momentum toward leisure is not only a prevalent aspiration it is becoming a much more attainable reality.<sup>16</sup>

To get a sense of the implication of these figures, consider Carter Evans’ 24 May 2019 CBS News report on human traffic jams occurring towards the top of Mt Everest.<sup>17</sup> In spite of most people claiming to have no time, many people have been able to set aside sufficient hours to gain the fitness required to tackle the world’s most difficult mountain summit. The result is an overcrowded mountain summit even more treacherous to climb.

We should therefore note that it is not just that we have more leisure hours than ever before, we now aspire to use these hours to do things like climbing the world’s highest mountain.

14      Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism*.  
15      Robert Whaples, “Hours of Work in U.S. History.” Economic History Association, <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/hours-of-work-in-u-s-history/>. Accessed 19 June 2022.  
16      Robert Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).  
17      Carter Evans, “Human Traffic Jam Atop Mt Everest’s ‘Death Zone,’” (CBS News, 2019).

### 3 Meaning-Making Machines

While previously work was primarily an issue of economic concern, it has now already begun its metamorphosis into a vehicle of meaning-making. The shift from working-to-earn, to working-to-create is already well under way. The maturation required will include understanding how to locate *imago Dei* within *missio Dei* and meaning in what we do.

Anecdotally, it is possible to see shifts in work expressed through previously mundane corners of adult existence, particularly if you focus on the millennial demographic. Having a coffee is now no simple endeavor. Previous generations were unlikely to have asked if their drink came from a single-origin; what altitude the coffee plant was grown at; what machine was used to roast the bean and what date the roast occurred or what milk-to-coffee ratio was used (assuming they wouldn't be snubbed for ordering a milky coffee). Yet these are now important factors when considering the morning brew.

While dinner may still consist of meat and veg, at the home of a millennial you are likely to be served a slice of meat that has been cooking for 8–12 hours, marinating for a day before that, and brined in salted water for the three days before that—with artisan vegetables that have been home grown in the window box of their minimally furnished (rental) apartment. The beer that accompanies the meal may well have been home-brewed. Simply stated, tasks once viewed as necessarily functional have now, due to an increase in leisure time and increased financial stability, been transformed into vehicles of meaning.

In terms of the workplace, while the research is conflicted, a recurrent theme is that those aged between 18–36 place enormous stock not simply on how much they get paid for a job, but what *value* and *meaning* their work actually has. A study by Smith and Nichols found that: “Millennials also desire work that has meaning. Enjoyment in what one does ranked higher in importance than financial gains. If a company continues to assign meaningless tasks, then they may find themselves with a higher turnover.”<sup>18</sup> They note the competing values in the mind of the modern worker:

While salary is still important in determining success, work that has meaning and enjoyment in what one does rated higher in importance than financial gains. Millennials rank social awareness high on organizational responsibility and prefer work that is socially responsible. Perhaps

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18 J. Travis Smith and Tommy Nichols, “Understanding the Millennial Generation,” *Journal of Business Diversity* 15(1) (2015): 42.

this is also a cause of the recession, but Millennials prefer meaningful and challenging jobs that potentially can advance their career.<sup>19</sup>

Research on millennials and Gen Zs in ‘meaningful’ work appears to be a gap in the literature, perhaps due to the ambiguity in defining what is considered meaningful. However the common claim that younger people are less attentive, less committed, and less consistent may come from a single cause: they are on a continual search for a life filled with meaning. If they do not find it where they are, they have both the time and the resource to find it elsewhere.

It is not just this ubiquitous quest for meaning that presents the workforce with a problem, but the rapid pace at which the workforce is evolving. Uber has sprung to success just in time for driverless cars to potentially make their workforce redundant. This might not negatively impact the creators of Uber’s innovative business model, but it would impact the many drivers who are likely to be replaced by driverless cars.

Those who find themselves unable to continually find or create meaning in life will potentially be the ones who experience a certain paralysis which, if not carefully monitored, may become synonymous with Harari’s projection of the rise of the useless class. This could mean that creativity becomes a primary form of human currency. It will not (just) be those that lack money who will be unable to navigate the future, but those who lack creativity as well. As already noted, the problem in Harari’s own words, is that “people are not just unemployed, but unemployable.”<sup>20</sup> Humans are unable to keep up with the wheel of continual reinvention: “even if the ex-insurance agent somehow makes the transition into a virtual-world designer, the pace of progress is such that within another decade he might have to reinvent himself yet again.”

This is supported by projections that those in Generation Alpha (born between 2010–2025) will have up to 18 jobs in their lifetime, across six careers.<sup>21</sup> Millennials (those born 1980–1994) and Gen Z’s (those born 1995–2009) now comprise over half of the Australia workforce, and their different attitudes to work are already making a difference.<sup>22</sup> Characteristics such as adaptability

19 Smith and Nichols, “Understanding the Millennial Generation.”

20 Harari, “The Meaning of Life in a World without Work.”

21 See for example, Sophie Renton and Ben Duffin, “The Future of Education 2020,” Education Future Forum (Sydney: McCrindle Research, 2020). [https://mccrindle.com.au/wp-content/uploads/reports/Education-Future-Report-2020.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Zo3SIQp45jnrySSQ7E7f\\_U6Cg3XECswZCoQY19BrpjdRptpYYtL\\_JDFQ](https://mccrindle.com.au/wp-content/uploads/reports/Education-Future-Report-2020.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Zo3SIQp45jnrySSQ7E7f_U6Cg3XECswZCoQY19BrpjdRptpYYtL_JDFQ). Accessed 19 June 2022.

22 Mark McCrindle and Ashley Fell, *Work Wellbeing: Leading Thriving Teams in Rapidly Changing Times* (Summer Hill: Rockpool, 2020), 29.

and ‘constant reinvention’ are becoming essential features of modern working life.

The evolution from economic to creative animals is well underway. As missiologists, our task is to consider the theological and philosophical implications of a world where people are searching for things to do, just to keep themselves engaged in some meaningful activity. Volf and Croasmun argue that a theology that serves the life of the world will promote a flourishing life, which they see as the “good towards which humans are meant to strive”.<sup>23</sup> What good should we suggest people strive towards in a world of rapidly changing possibilities?

#### 4 Theology of Leisure

The irony of theologically considering Harari’s claims needs to be acknowledged. Harari suggests that video games (alternate virtual worlds) may well play a significant part in the future. He folds religion into this same category. “What is religion if not a big virtual reality game played by millions of people together? ... [religions] invent imaginary laws ... if you forget to pray you lose points. If by the end of your life you gain enough points then after you die you go to the next level.”<sup>24</sup> His point, while intended as a jab, inadvertently acknowledges that religion has functioned for millennia as a primary source of meaning for humanity. Our challenge however, in a world of competing sources of meaning, is for our own traditions to rediscover the contributions they can make in the 21st century. Christianity has a timeless message and yet this message must find relevant expressions in each new era. The project of transforming work at the same time as the workforce is in decline could be an example of channeling our energy in the wrong direction and even be counter-productive to the task of Christian mission.

The task of religion is to find meaning in the light of God. It is therefore incumbent on every religious tradition to understand *missio Dei* in its cultural and social context. When it comes to work, one of the great shifts taking place is a movement from hands to head, to heart. In other words, we have gone through a time when work was primarily about what we did with our hands, then it was about what we accomplished through our thinking, and now it might become more about finding meaning; a question of the heart.

The questions surrounding a theology of leisure are ontological by nature. Defining human being in a post-work world is increasingly one of the urgent tasks of theology, as we look toward a future where many of the primal needs

23 Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World*, 13.

24 Harari, “The Meaning of Life in a World without Work.”

of human beings could be met in some form or another by technology. From sex, to conversation, to finance it may, in the not-too-distant future, be possible for people to opt out of human relational community for large chunks of time. AI will meet not only functional needs but relational ones as well.

One of the questions that a theology of leisure must address is whether a shift from working-to-earn and eat, to working for meaning, is more representative of what it means to be *imago Dei*. The creation portrait, where humans roamed Eden, naming the animals and keeping it in good order, suggests that creativity was a major part of God's original intention.

There are several ethical questions that emerge from the formulation of a theology of leisure. Two come immediately to mind:

1. What are the implications of transforming work, if work as an economic function will be altered dramatically within the next 50 years? If people are to find meaning and fulfilment in their vocation, will this lead to an inevitable existential crisis when traditional vocational pathways are replaced by automation?
2. It appears that many of the world's gravest injustices (slavery, exploitation of people and resources) relate more to how we spend our leisure time than our work time, and so with an increase in leisure should we predict a rise in the exploitation of some people, or a sharper class divide in some countries?

## 5 Concern #1: Transforming Work in Time for Its Demise

Regardless of disagreement on the timeframe of a decline of the workforce, the automation of various industries and the rapid rate at which technology is being developed cannot be denied. These factors are already at play. Consultants are already employed by companies to roll out new software that can reduce wage expenditure significantly. At supermarkets you already have to choose between a lengthy wait in line to be served by an actual human or being able to immediately scan your own products through the automatic self-checkout. It is not daydreaming to imagine a future where you need only insert your finger into an ATM type space in the wall and watch a machine calculate your bloodwork and overall health in minutes. Implants that monitor or control your vision or hearing may well become the next step in human self-betterment—the androidization of the human *being*.<sup>25</sup>

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25 For more see Lorrimar, "Co-Creation and Work in an Increasingly Technological World."

It could be ethically irresponsible to spend too much time connecting faith, which is our primary mode of meaning-making as Christians, to the current landscape of human work if we suspect that this landscape may undergo drastic modification, and then recodification, over the coming decade.

One of the key hallmarks of people losing their jobs, or being made redundant, is not simply a loss of income but a loss of purpose. If we are on the brink of seeing large cross-sections of the population becoming unemployed and unemployable because of automation, the existential ramifications are significant enough. If we spend too much time convincing people that their work is a mode through which they can make meaning, we risk creating the existential cliff off which people feel they must then jump.

## 6 Concern #2: Leisurely Exploitation

Imagine a retelling of the Garden of Eden story, but instead of the first humans being given tasks such as naming the animals, or tending the land, they had nothing to do to fill their time. They just existed. Suddenly the paradisiacal Edenic state turns into a nexus of boredom. This is often the question leveled at those espousing idyllic visions of the afterlife: *What might we do all day so that we don't bore ourselves to death?*

The reality of the human condition as we currently find it, is that our answer to the problem of boredom often comes in the form of consumerism.

People often assume consumerism is a result of greed, and excessive attachment to material things. William Cavanaugh does well to reframe this however and examines how our leaning toward consumption has more to do with *detachment*. "People do not hoard money" he claims, "they spend it. People do not cling to things; they discard them and buy other things."<sup>26</sup> A society driven by principles of consumption is committed to the singular gospel of commodification: *anything can be sold*.

In terms of what we see now, this gospel would ring true. In 2016 there were an estimated 40.3 million people in modern slavery, which includes categories such as forced labor, forced marriage, and forced sexual exploitation.<sup>27</sup> While it is true that these exploitations take the primary form of *work*, they have arisen

26 William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 34.

27 Figured sources from the International Labor Organization, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm>, as well as findings from the Global Slavery Index, <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/>. Both accessed 19 June 2022.



due to a significantly high demand in western countries for access to leisurely activities. Fashion, coffee, sex. They all come with degrees of exploitation.

Cavanaugh goes on to note that “consumerism is not so much about having more as it is about having something else; that’s why it is not simply *buying* but *shopping* that is the heart of consumerism.”<sup>28</sup> Shopping is a function of leisure and is symptomatic of our need to occupy ourselves in a world where we are becoming increasingly disconnected from primal human needs.

Considering the ethical impact of increased leisure hours on consumption and exploitation is therefore another important missiological task, for the effect on the most vulnerable could be considerable.

## 7      *Still Imago Dei*

Theologians routinely debate the meaning of being *imago Dei*. Often it is linked to having dominion over the world, a task commonly related to caring for the earth and assuming responsibility for its flourishing, although initially it often provided a justification for domination and exploitation of the world’s resources. In this view, as God’s image-bearers, humans are tasked with the responsibility of representing God in the world, acting in God’s place. Adam’s first assignment was to name the animals, a noteworthy assignment because name and identity can’t be separated, and a poor name impacts identity. Being human is thus being responsible and being willing to stand in the gap for God, creatively working towards the best world possible. As the range of world shaping options continues to grow, possibilities never previously considered emerge. Our response should be shaped by our duty to represent God in the world, and to represent God not simply to other humans, but to animals, plants and the planet itself.

In a world where we have often overstretched our mandate, eliminating species and destroying sensitive eco systems, it might be as well to pause and ask if being *imago Dei* is today not better expressed by simply pausing and standing in wonder at the world that has been made. Rather than attempting to change our world, we could better use our many leisure hours to tread gently through the garden God has given us, and to value its great beauty. Perhaps this is part of being fully alive.

As we move towards a world where leisure rather than work is our main activity, asking what it means to represent God becomes an ever more nuanced

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28      Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, 35.

question. Perhaps a clue is to be found in a core belief we have about God, that God is triune. Historically we have spoken of God as Father, Son and Spirit—these terms reminding us that God can only be understood relationally (e.g. you are not a Father unless you are in relationship to a child; nor are you a son, unless you are in relationship to a parent). God introduces God's own being in terms of relationship, and our new life found in Christ Jesus is also expressed relationally: "See with what love the Father has loved us, that we should be called the children of God. And so we are." (1 Jn 3.1) Our humanity is defined relationally, indeed, we are the children of God.

But what if the possibility of relationship is denied to us? A deep-seated dread within many human hearts is that a day might dawn when accident or disease might leave us in a state where we are radically different to all we have been before, perhaps drifting in a comatose state, or perhaps in a body where we are physically fit and present, but where every memory has been lost and our mental functioning is minimal. If a key part of being human is to be relational, another aspect is that we are vulnerable. Thus it has always been, for as the opening chapters of the Bible inform us, the first humans were vulnerable to the temptation in the garden, and did indeed succumb to it. There is no humanity without vulnerability. Though technological advances are often intended to safeguard us from the risks inherent in being human, there is a stage beyond which this cannot go. It is perhaps our vulnerability that keeps us open to God, for without it, we might mistakenly conclude that we are not in the image of God, but that we are God.

In 1892 Rudyard Kipling envisioned a world where "no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame, but each for the joy of working."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps that world is within our grasp. But it will only be a better world (as opposed to a different world) if we are truly open to the other and reject the temptation to become islands of technological self-sufficiency. That temptation will become ever stronger. In digging into our core identity, we will find our freedom. If by 2040 the average human life will allow 246,000 hours of leisure, the opportunity to develop truly transforming relationships will be greater than ever before. Consider the possibilities for maturation. Some will use those many hours to craft elegant meals, others will make fine clothes, yet others will gift us tunes not yet sung. Being human in a post-work world will allow us to dig more deeply into realms not yet imagined. This is not a source for fear, but for excitement and hopefulness. Perhaps it will be a time when we can rediscover that at our core, we belong to one another, to the earth, and to

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29 Rudyard Kipling, 'When Earth's Last Picture is Painted' (poem, 2010).

God—and that without the other, the earth and God, we really do not exist. Certainly without the other, the earth and God, we will never flourish.

Yet lest we think that this will make us immune to the trials and potential terrors of our humanity, a cautionary stance is wise, for even as we roam our new Garden of Eden we will discover that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is ever present, and that deciding if its fruit is really forbidden, is no easy task. Maturation involves tending to the human vulnerability to temptation, including leisurely exploitation.

In this chapter we have not attempted to provide easy answers to the questions that lie before us, but perhaps we have highlighted some of the more important missiological frontiers that we face. Noting them is a significant start. Grappling with how we conceptualise and practice work and leisure in the light of future work trends is an important component of a mature conversation about transforming work and leisure. Finding ways in which all can flourish and glorify God through being fully alive, remains our ongoing creative task.

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# Securing Foundations: Some Learnings from Indigenous Christians

*Robyn Reynolds*

## Abstract

This chapter reflects on some ways in which the experience and insights of women, especially Indigenous women, reflect an integrated Christian life. The discussion centres on the contexts of the workplace in Christian mission. While the issues raised relate to the church's workplace generally, an Australian (and mainly Catholic) perspective remains the primary focus. Works of art and ritual are given special consideration; creative efforts in the work places of Indigenous Christian leaders are revealing and challenging. Receiving cultural insights and learning from Indigenous Christians may provide new possibilities and direction for integrating faith and work.

## Keywords

Marginalization – Indigeneity – creative art – workplace – leadership – interculturality – mission

## 1 Introduction

Indigenous peoples of the world already have—or have had—an understanding and approach to life that is wholistic. Life itself is sacred. “God gave us the Dreaming,” Wenten Rubuntja, Central Australian elder, law man and Christian, once told me. All of life is interconnected, work and play, law and ceremony. “Our job is to follow the Dreaming,” said Wenten, meaning the work of caring for country, honoring one’s totem, respecting the ancestors, following kinship, educating the young, and singing, painting, dancing one’s story.

Allow me to give a personal example from a time when, along with an Aboriginal religious Sister and friend from Wadeye, we went ‘out bush’ with her Murinhpatha family. Through the day there would be the gathering of food, the resting, walking again, the story-telling, observing and accompanying the

trees, birds, fish ... drinking sweet water from the long-stemmed water lilies. The men would be hunting. As the afternoon wore on, we women and the children would gather wood for the fire. The men would have brought the magpie geese, the kangaroo, or the fish, and the fire would be lit. As the food was being cooked, the men, sitting one behind the other, were painting each other's back with the elaborate and colourful designs depicting their stories. Following the meal, some of the older women would begin singing; the didjeridoo player and the men with the clapping sticks could soon be heard. After some time, the dancing would begin, the stories told, sung and remembered. Little ones would, in a while, fall asleep. The fire would be stoked. New songs, more dances, with bright stars in attendance. When did anything start or end? Later, deep in the night, around the large circle, groups would prepare to sleep ... all of this 'life's work', along with nature itself, and the whole of creation, wonderfully emerging. With the early morning light Tjinmari and I would rise and walk down to the river to wash. When we returned the billy would be boiling, Tjinmari's mother having prepared breakfast for us. A new day's 'work' had begun.<sup>1</sup> All of this 'life's work', along with nature itself, and the whole of creation, was continuing. *Missio Dei* unfolding ...

These days life for the people of Wadeye (perhaps even when 'out bush') is very different. But in the example given later, of Wadeye Aboriginal women engaging in Christian ministry, the integration of faith and action in the day-to-day workplace remains strong.

Today there is an increasing awareness of the fundamental place of mission and ministry to the whole of theology. The 2nd Vatican Council's declaration "the church is missionary by its very nature" carried critical implications for the universal church and for a globalized world.<sup>2</sup> However, a missiological perspective for theology is still yet to be achieved. My call here is for a shift in the discourse, and in particular to those engaging in both the discourse and the lived workplace reality; new partners in the conversation are long overdue. Women's perceptions and the views of Indigenous persons regarding an understanding and experience of mission and ministry can no longer be viewed as auxiliary but must be recognized and welcomed as integral.

This is an integral part of maturation. Adler and Katoneene underlined the importance of Christ in the world, the Church in the world, ministry of the

1 Many Aboriginal languages do not have a word for 'work'. Arrernte does use the word *mpwareme* which refers to the verb 'make', but, as with many other Aboriginal languages and dialects, an introduced coined word such as *warrke* is used today.

2 Vatican II, *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity), in *The Documents of Vatican Council II*, edited by Walter M. Abbott, SJ (London: Geoffrey Chapman 1967), #2.

laity and ordained impact, all of which I acknowledge.<sup>3</sup> But a mature and balanced approach to these sub-themes will best be realised when we listen to the voices not just of older Western white males but also people of different ages and cultures, indigenous people and women. The Spirit will speak vitally to us about transforming work through these diverse voices. Thus I welcomed the invitation of this volume to reflect on my experience and observations as a call for maturation for the ministry of the whole people of God. What I have learned in Australia has potent value for understanding what Christ is doing in the world and reconceptualising how God is doing this through the whole people of God.

This chapter's discussion comes under three headings: re-setting the table, challenges from Indigenous Australians, and revisiting approaches and practice towards a spirituality of the workplace.

## 2 Re-setting the Table

Ursula King once wrote an article "Feminism: the Missing Dimension in the dialogue of religions." She notes that wherever the dialogue has developed, women have had little part in it, at least at the official level. Proof of this invisibility of women is evident in the literature, as well as in recorded and photographed events, where women are absent or marginal. King wrote: "One has to have a feminist consciousness to notice the lacunae, the relative non-participation of women in this 'dialogue'."<sup>4</sup> Too many women are missing from those seated at the missiology table. Some are moving around the edges, serving, 'waiting'; others remain outside, or are nowhere to be seen. I reflect on aspects of women's experience, especially Indigenous women's experience—as well as the exclusion of these—in the understanding and approach to mission theology and a lived spirituality of mission in the workplace. My understanding sits comfortably with the strong views expressed by King. Fiorenza similarly comments:

Feminist scholarship unveils the patriarchal functions of the intellectual and scientific frameworks generated and perpetrated by a male-centered scholarship that makes women invisible or peripheral in what we know

3 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene, "Laity", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. 2nd edn., edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 658–664.

4 Ursula King, "Feminism: The Missing Dimension in the Dialogue of Religions", *Pluralism and the Religions: The Theological and Political Dimensions*, edited by John D'Arcy May (London: Cassell, 1998), 40–55.

about the world, human life and cultural or religious history. Placing women's experience and subjectivity at the core of the intellectual inquiry has challenged the theoretical frameworks of all academic disciplines.<sup>5</sup>

Gospel-inspired mission is about working towards a better world and the concerns of a global, inclusive theology are to do with social change as well as theoretical worldview. Gender must be recognized as a *constitutive* factor in the formulation of a theology and practice of mission and ministry. Women and indigenous women bring powerful prophetic critiques of the dominant missiological discourse. They are indicators and enablers of a developing maturation that is needed in the transformation of work as mission conversation.

My intention is not simply to highlight the discordance created by disregarding or avoiding the voice and experience of Indigenous persons. Nor is it to ignore negative aspects of women's roles, for example the complicity of western women in the colonizing project. Rather, the hope is that in recognizing impoverishment and diminishment, a place may be open and sought after, a more humble, hospitable place for embracing the wisdom and truth—and the gifts of all persons, especially those who are marginalized. Incorporating a perspective of inclusiveness and equality is in fact a necessity as part of maturation.

In his paper, "The Impact of Feminist Theologies on Roman Catholic Theology," William Burrows states that in theology as in other fields it is no longer possible or desirable in today's world to ignore gender issues. He writes:

I watch with alarm the enfeeblement of institutional Catholicism and the estrangement of so many from it, largely caused by failing to pay attention to women's issues. The dysfunctionality of the church means that men and women cannot honestly debate issues publicly, so they can profit from each other's insights and correct each other's distortions.<sup>6</sup>

The monumental work of missiologists such as Bosch, Bevans, Schroeder and others is certainly not to be downplayed. In many respects their work has been ground-breaking and, takes seriously a more inclusive approach.<sup>7</sup> Significant

5 Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Breaking the Silence—Becoming Visible," *Concilium* (182) (1980), 3–14.

6 William Burrows, "Concilium Round Table: The impact of feminist theologies on Roman Catholic Theology," *Concilium* (1996/1), 96.

7 Stephen Bevans, "God inside out. Towards a missionary theology of the Holy Spirit," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22 (1998), 102–105. Also of major significance is Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder's *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004); and of course David Bosch's seminal work *Transforming*



contributions by Andraos have also been most welcome.<sup>8</sup> For example, “The Church and Indigenous Peoples in the Americas: in between reconciliation and decolonization,” edited by Andros, gathers together the voices of Indigenous persons around the globe, including that of Australian Aboriginal woman Sherry Balcombe.<sup>9</sup>

While the links between mission and colonialism have been recognized, the gender connection remains largely unexplored. Incidentally and importantly, *Vita Consecrata* no 57 declared that women’s self-awareness can help men to reconsider “where they place themselves in history, and how they interpret it.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, I would suggest that in doing so, the church repents for its sexism, surely a necessary step in its being a sign of hope for humanity.

I do acknowledge the large and valuable amount of research and writing that has been done on the history of women in mission, and of women’s spirituality and experience of mission. Susan Smith’s book *Women in Mission: From the New Testament to Today* is an excellent example of this research.<sup>11</sup> Her work is historical and descriptive; examining the important role of missionary women in the Catholic church down through the ages. German missiologist Katja Heidemanns clarifies what the feminist approach as it relates to mission is and is not:

A critical feminist standpoint in mission theology does not exclusively emerge from, nor does it primarily aim at women’s mission in practice. It describes a process and method of reflection that employs a systemic analysis of ecclesial-religious and socio-political structures of subordination and exclusion, and understands missiological reflection as a practice of resistance and transformation.<sup>12</sup>

My intention and scope is more modest. I wish to raise issues for further discussion on some of the issues, especially those regarding the practical living out in the workplace, of faith and ministry. Missiology, it seems to be, has been standing on one leg. To hear predominantly a non-Indigenous and primarily

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*Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission*. 20th Anniversary edition (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011),

8 Michael Andraos, Bernadeth Caero Bustillos and Geraldo de Mori, eds, *Christianity and Indigenous Peoples* (London: SCM Press, 2019).

9 Sherry Balcombe, “Aboriginal Spifrituality: A Testimony from Australia,” *Christianities and Indigenous Peoples*, 15–19.

10 John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996).

11 Susan S. Smith, *Women in Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007).

12 Katja Heidemanns, “Missiology or Risk?: Explorations in Mission Theology from a German Feminist Perspective,” *International Review of Mission*, 93 (368) (Jan 2004), 107.

a male voice means we are “off balance.” Seeking and including the views and experiences of the marginalized, the poor, and the voice of women, will enable us to walk better—and with grace.

It is the voices of the laity – the whole people of God – that we need to be attentive to from the grassroots of their experience. A problem with the language and understanding of “laity” is its negative definition as those who are not ordained, and those who lack the associated competence and training. This is why laypeople have been conceptualised as secondary in the ministry of the church and seen as the object of the ‘real’ ministry of preaching and pastoral care. The emerging ecumenical paradigm, however, views the people of God as the church in the world.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, it is an immature theological mistake to view women and/or indigenous people as somehow secondary or merely recipients of the real ministry of dominant Western male leadership and discourse. Maturation is cultivated by listening attentively to different voices. This is reminiscent of Jacob Loewen’s comment that God has buried such treasure in Scripture that the church will not discover until the interpretive perspectives of all the world’s cultures have been applied to them.<sup>14</sup> Part of the good news of the gospel is that Christ is present in the world through the whole people of God which includes the valuable contributions of women and indigenous people.

At the dawn of creation, with the Spirit breathing over the waters, *missio Dei* is present and active. In the person of Jesus, we see God Incarnate, *missio Dei* par excellence. *Missio Dei*—God’s Workplace! As Shawn Copeland says so well: “The incarnation is God’s own radical act of solidarity”.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, fundamentally, ‘mission’ is *missio Dei*. God is love, God is mission, and in diverse, mysterious and profound ways, *missio Dei* continues to be manifest today.

Christians believe they are invited to participate in the unfolding of God’s life, to actually cooperate in shaping this love story through the movement of the Spirit. Being drawn up into the divine dance of *missio Dei* nurtures a perspective where *missio Dei* is expansive, abundant, extravagant, loving, inclusive, and always engaging with the human condition and life’s realities. This is what and who Jesus was sent to be; and it is the challenge for all those engaged in Christian ministry to meet the other with respect, deep listening, sincerity

13 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity”, 658–659; cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 385–387, 478–485.

14 Cited in Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 18.

15 Shawn Copeland, “Difference as a category in Critical theologies for the Liberation of women,” *Concilium* (1996/1), 150.

and care, especially in encounters with those who are generally shunned, dismissed, humiliated, oppressed, rejected. This is the way of Jesus, the way of participating in *missio Dei*. Such a mature mission theology and praxis must fearlessly reject policies and practices of discrimination and systemic injustice, being wary of a liberation and justice rhetoric which seems to still sit very easily with structures of domination and exclusion. Sabine Plonz has written:

A theology of feminist mission as an alternative to the history of the violence of colonialism and imperialism and the historical paternalism of mission requires a paradigm shift: receiving, not sending, becomes the primary mission experience ... The intentional act of receiving, not sending is the first action of missiological communication from the human point of view ... It asks for a human response to God's call (John 20.21–22).<sup>16</sup>

Today's place for mission, whether it be in far distant countries or in common, familiar places, is often within the multicultural and multi-religious context. When the attitude is one of resistance rather than welcome, exclusion rather than inclusion, what is perceived as self-preserving for those who are safe and strong, is life-destroying for those who are vulnerable.

Furthermore, writing in light of a work ethic, Matthew Ogilvie has argued that:

there is a social obligation for economic and social conditions to be organised so that people can make their contribution to society in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity. Work, especially, cannot be dehumanising or exploitative of a person, nor must certain work be imposed upon a person.<sup>17</sup>

Too many world leaders, politicians, educators even, continue to promote a culture at home with prejudice and based on ignorance, suspicion and self-interest. There is need to stay cognisant of the ways in which the church too, is prone to these same temptations. The church's extensive 'missionary enterprise' was initiated, organized, maintained—for the most part—in terms of kyriarchal power. Susan Abraham believes that "ecclesiology, which limits the role of women to traditional roles, simply reveals the extent to which

16 Sabine Plonz, "Feminist Theology and Overcoming Violence," *Sedos*, 42 (5/6) (2010), 119.

17 Matthew C Ogilvie, *A Catholic University in the Kimberly. Reflections on a Catholic Identity* (Sydney: The Lonergan Centre, Canisius College, 2018), 43.

institutions and, therefore, ecclesiology itself reflects kyriarchal concerns".<sup>18</sup> The development of mission theology has its roots in a patriarchal world and largely colonial history. But it is *God's* mission the church serves: "the Church is not the divine initiative itself, but the human social response to God's grace and word."<sup>19</sup>

A theology and spirituality for mission and ministry needs to be situated in a wider context, in a more comprehensive ideological framework, including cultural studies, economics, religious pluralism, globalization, politics and ecojustice. Feminist studies in particular can no longer be ignored, and the interdependence between a mission theology and praxis needs always to be addressed. Renowned mission educator and theologian, Frances Adeney explores this link in her ground-breaking work on *Women and Christian Mission*; the very subtitle of her work is "Ways of Knowing and Doing theology." Adeney notes that "Mercy and compassion became central to Catholic women's missionary efforts, becoming not only a mission theory but a missionary method of service."<sup>20</sup> Today, any mission endeavour will surely fail unless it is more inclusive, certainly less directive and controlling. A receptive and respectful approach to Christian ministry, acknowledges the importance of partnership, and of learning, enrichment and growth that is mutual.

The very notion of *Ad Gentes* (to the people) requires careful attention. Too much emphasis on the *giving* church can be a recipe for disaster: the church on mission, seeing itself, primarily, as saving, civilizing, developing, enabling, inculturating, teaching, is obviously in much need of ongoing conversion. Similarly, the receiving church may also be tempted to identify itself primarily as needy, marginal, underdeveloped and ignorant. Understanding the 'giving' and 'receiving' roles as being interdependent is important. Mission and ministry today require such a relational consciousness and imagination. In the final section of his ground-breaking volume *Transforming Mission*, Bosch moves to some exploration of what he names as "an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm."

Bosch does not consider matters relating to indigenous peoples specifically, nor does he examine issues concerning gender. He does not refer to feminist scholarship or perspectives in his writings, nor does he connect mission with

18 Susan Abraham, "Justice as the Mark of Catholic Feminist Ecclesiology," in *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology*, edited by Susan Abraham and Elena Procaro-Foley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 208.

19 Brendan Lovett, *For the Joy Set Before Us: Methodology of Adequate Theological Reflection on Mission* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 176.

20 Frances S. Adeney, *Women and Christian Mission: Ways of Knowing and Doing Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 225.

eco-theology. Aside from these omissions and disappointments, his work is nonetheless ground-breaking. Bosch considers mission as a “church with others,” for example, and examines at some length the idea of mission as “quest for justice” and again, “mission as inculturation,” and “mission as liberation”. Bosch speaks of moving from a theology of mission to a missionary theology. His words remain profound and of absolute importance today:

To say that the Church is essentially missionary does not mean that mission is church-centered. It is *missio Dei*. It is trinitarian. It is mediating the love of God the Father, who is Parent of all people, whoever and wherever they may be.... It is mediating the presence of God the Spirit, who blows where he wishes ... So mission concerns the world also beyond the boundaries of the church. It is the *world* God loves and for the sake of which the Christian community is called ... Mission means serving, healing, and reconciling a divided, wounded humanity.<sup>21</sup>

So, mission and ministry is understood in the workplace of our daily lives, and especially in the lives of those who are struggling and marginalized in our world. Some reflections on the Australian Indigenous context may now be of value.

### 3 Challenges from Indigenous Australians

For many years, Aboriginal elder Joan Hendriks, has worked with Government bodies, educational institutions and the churches in work for reconciliation and justice. Hendriks has suggested that “lack of understanding of cultural differences denies the reality of the meaning of the mission of the Church in spreading the gospel message to all peoples of God’s creation.”<sup>22</sup> Reliable, comprehensive and inclusive accounts of the engagement between Christianity and Aboriginal religions were hindered by major factors. Firstly, rarely was serious and respectful dialogue entered into with the Aboriginal people regarding their spiritual insights. Secondly, anthropological research carried its own agenda and the prevailing western male-centered focus gave little place for anything other than an androcentric interpretation of religions and

21 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology. 20th Anniversary edn. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]), 505.

22 Joan Hendriks, “Moving the Way Forward,” *Australasian Catholic Record*, 83 (3) (July 2006): 303.

cultures. Early writings of female anthropologists were largely overlooked. A culture of discrimination, avoidance and silence kept Australian understandings in a place of arrogance, indifference and racism over a very long period. The emergence of non-biased, gender-inclusive knowledge and understanding was prevented and delayed for many years.

According to David Tracy, feminist theology rightly identifies sexism as inhibiting honest dialogue. "Hearing the voice of women," he suggests, "is one of the chief ways our world and church will begin to discuss the full range of things necessary to bring health to humankind".<sup>23</sup> For many years the classic interpretation of the male and female dichotomy mirroring the sacred/profane dichotomy in Aboriginal religion, continued to pervade the thinking and writing. Renowned scholar Mircea Eliade had stated categorically that female initiations were just for individuals and were "decidedly less developed than those for boy's initiations."<sup>24</sup> Such views represented commonly held assumptions based on ignorance, as well as unfounded beliefs about male superiority. What emerged from this androcentric approach was a view of Indigenous Australian women which described their status as degraded and subordinate. However, anthropologist Phyllis Kaberry, who studied religion and ritual amongst the Indigenous women of the Kimberleys in Western Australia, wrote in 1939:

When we turn to religion, we find that Aboriginal woman has a reverence for, and yet a sense of kinship with, the totemic ancestors, a reliance in the rites which they have instituted for her needs.<sup>25</sup>

Kaberry's writings passed unnoticed or were undermined. In the introduction to Kaberry's work, Professor Elkin was to emphasize "the sacred character of the men," urging all to remember that women are outside the "sphere of sacred belief and ritual."<sup>26</sup> Even in the 1980's, and despite the publication of Diane Bell's *Daughters of the Dreaming* (1983), Aboriginal women's spiritual life was still being dismissed or trivialized. Maddock, one of the few anthropologists making critical analysis of Stanner's comprehensive work on the Wadeye people, stated that "Women's cults are centered on narrow, divisive and personal

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23 David Tracy, "Concilium Round Table: The impact of feminist theologies on Roman Catholic Theology," *Concilium* (1996/1): 97.

24 Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 41.

25 Phyllis Kaberry, *Aboriginal Women: Sacred and Profane* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939).

26 Kaberry, *Aboriginal Women*, 311.

interests, such as love-making magic and reacting to physiological crises.”<sup>27</sup> Maddock excluded, as well as belittled women’s place in religious affairs, claiming that what qualified one to act ritually was simply to be born male and then to move from childhood into manhood. In some respects, this is not so different from what remains officially to be the case in the sacramental life of Roman Catholicism today. Bell claims that much of the early work on women’s ceremonies has yet to be investigated and remains hidden and buried beneath a pile of studies of secret male cults, totemism and kinship which assume that the male view is the only important perspective.<sup>28</sup>

Over the last two decades, writings by Indigenous Australian women reflecting on their Christian and Aboriginal spirituality have emerged. Aboriginal leader Vicki Clarke, former co-ordinator of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Melbourne believes that “We need to look at a more holistic picture when it comes to changes in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Church.”<sup>29</sup> Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, Senior Australian of the Year in 2021, acclaimed Aboriginal artist, community leader and educator, in her well-known “Dadirri” address, speaks of the quiet stillness and the waiting. She writes:

We don’t mind waiting, because we want things to be done with care. Sometimes many hours will be spent on painting the body before an important ceremony. We don’t like to hurry. There is nothing more important than what we are attending to ... We are River people. We cannot hurry the river.<sup>30</sup>

It is as a non-Indigenous, white, western missionary and theologian that I reflect and speak. The perceptions offered, come with an awareness of the scarcity of Aboriginal Catholic women theologians in the discourse. It is important to acknowledge the silence, to respect it, learn from it. Maryanne Confoy argued that as western women worked to liberate people from gender oppression, their own self-awareness shifted:

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- 27 Kenneth Maddock, “Sacrifice and other Models in Australian Aboriginal Ritual,” in *Metaphors of Interpretation: Essays in Honour of W. E. H. Stanner*, edited by D.E. Barwick, J. Beckett & M. Reay (Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1985), 135.
  - 28 Dianne Bell, “Aboriginal Women and the Religious Experience,” *The Charles Strong Lectures 1972–1984*, edited by Robert B. Crotty (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 44–45.
  - 29 Vicki Walker, “Vignette,” *Pacifica*, 19 (3) (Oct 2006), 264. Note also Vicky’s DVD, *Knowing Home: A reflection of Personal Spirituality by a woman from the river country* (2004).
  - 30 Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, “Dadirri,” *Compass*, 22 (1988), 10.

they began to hear other voices. Gradually they recognised that they themselves were playing a part in the experience of subjugation that they were trying to eradicate. Unwittingly, western women had spoken on behalf of all women, not realising that their voice was smothering the voices of their sisters in other cultures.<sup>31</sup>

Amongst Indigenous Australian writers, Ann Pattel-Grey has presented a strong challenge to Australian women generally. She argues that the freedom of Indigenous women has been diminished by the racism of Australian feminism: "our origins are different and our histories are incomparable ... Aboriginal women of Australia welcome women who are willing to listen, and learn—to open their hearts."<sup>32</sup> As a leader in the Uniting Church of Australia, Pattel-Grey's call has particularly relevance for Christian women. By still often being in positions of more power than their Indigenous sisters in the churches, non-Indigenous women, unless they intentionally choose otherwise, can unfortunately still hinder the process towards liberation. Kwok Pui-lan leaves no room for uncertainty or ambiguity:

We cannot understand ourselves without listening to others, especially to those we have oppressed or have the potential to oppress. Such critical engagement is the beginning of solidarity.<sup>33</sup>

An example from the Wadeye community is relevant here. Darrananthi, friend and colleague over many years, recalls the occasion when she and one or two other women, wondered together about having a special Morning Ritual to mark the beginning of the school year for the young people. Yes, ministry in the workplace! The idea for the ceremony arose from the women's conversation over some weeks as they shared hopes and anxieties concerning their sometimes troubled young people. The ritual would have to involve the elders, the particular families, the various clan groups and the entire community. The Morning Ritual reflected an experience-based, inclusive spirituality, incorporating into the otherwise often restricted forms of western liturgy, significant expressions including dance, lament, music and song, narrative and art.

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31 Maryanne Confoy, "Freedom, Entrapment, and Experience of 'Other,'" *Freedom and Entrapment: Women Thinking Theology*, edited by Maryanne Confoy, Dorothy A. Lee and Joan Nowotny (Melbourne: Dove, 1995), 23.

32 Anne Pattel-Grey, "Not Yet Tiddas," *Freedom and Entrapment*, edited by Maryanne Confoy, Dorothy A. Lee and Joan Nowotny (Melbourne: Dove, 1995), 191.

33 Kwok, Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 60.



The call to mission, to announcing and manifesting the Good News of God's reign, began with the sounds and smells, the contexts of the everyday. With the early morning's didgeridoo call, the children and teenagers, accompanied by members of their particular clan groups, made the long walk by the creek, then through the village and up to the church. As the songs continued, the young ones passed through the smoke as a sign of the desire for healing and new life. Moving into the church, all could see the large painting created by the women during the days of preparation.

The footprints represent all the different clan groups coming to gather around the sacred water-hole, Jesus ... The painting is about our early mission history, and our Baptism story. The idea of our ceremony is about listening with respect to the elders, listening to God ... That is represented by the shell designs.<sup>34</sup>

The music and dance, the body paint on the young people, the canvas banners, all the various art forms drew on the long traditions and cultural context of the people and became a powerful instrument for sacred ceremony. The ritual was about information, formation, and transformation. Students were well aware the ceremony had been conceived and organized by their elders. They respectfully participated, and by listening and learning were able to experience their school life as valued and important. Furthermore, the ceremony invited a deeper understanding and response to their own Christian faith and commitment.

In her article "Art as theological conversation," Anne Mallaby considers the organic, social, and evolving nature of the artistic endeavour as a creative 'meeting place.' She suggests that "the creative process of the artist, mirrored in the experience of the viewer, potentially forms a creative cycle from the artist to viewer, thus echoing creative responses beyond the confines of what any single artist can imagine."<sup>35</sup> Mallaby suggests that the purpose of art is to be transformed, and she has recognized a mystical experience in the work of art.<sup>36</sup>

During the Wadeye Morning Ritual, the young people received the sacred indigo oils and the message (in the local *Murinbatha* language) from the senior

34 Robyn Reynolds, "Catholic Sacrament engaging with Wadeye Ritual," PhD thesis (Darwin: NT University, 2000), 231.

35 Anne Mallaby, "Art as Theological Conversation," *Together in Ministry: Essays to Honour John Paver*, edited by Heather Cameron, Colin Hunter, Michael Kelly and Randall Prior (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2009), 144 [141–152].

36 Mallaby, "Art as Theological Conversation," 150.

women. As the shells were shaken, the young ones heard about listening with respect to their parents and elders; they were encouraged to be spiritually strong in their lives, to hear and take notice of God's word, and to always listen carefully to the Spirit. The women were aware of the significance of holding the ritual in the church. I believe their choice was deliberate, dangerous and prophetic. To claim and exercise authority in this important ceremony, was to make an important statement about leadership and responsibility as Indigenous Catholic women in and for the community. Fiorenza comments:

Feminist theology does not ask for the integration of women into patriarchal ecclesial structures, nor does it advocate a separatist strategy, but it works for the transformation of Christian symbols, tradition and community. It means simply to make women visible as active participants and leaders in the Church, to underline women's contributions and suffering through Church history and to safe-guard women's autonomy and freedom from spiritual-theological patriarchal controls.<sup>37</sup>

I have already noted the insight of Susan Abraham, who states that "ecclesiology, which limits the role of women to traditional roles, simply reveals the extent to which institutions and, therefore, ecclesiology itself reflects kyriarchal concerns."<sup>38</sup> Fortunately, Aboriginal Catholic women in many parts of Australia are providing leadership and inspiration. They are doing exactly what Abraham and others are pleading for:

We have to challenge the narrow and gendered interpretation of the marks of the church by infusing the church's catholicity with justice through a more capacious theological imagination, in order to re-think the problem of gendered and colonial ecclesiology.<sup>39</sup>

Wadeye women—like Catholic women generally, who have been excluded in the male, ordained and celibate-led church—continue to find new pathways in the exercise of leadership. For the 'official' church (the parish priest and diocesan bishop, for example), the Morning Ritual *could* have carried a potential threat or challenge, or at least an embarrassment: here were the women

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37 Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "For Women in Men's World: A Critical Theology of Liberation," in *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis 1996), 9–10.

38 Abraham, "Justice as the Mark of Catholic Feminist Ecclesiology," 208.

39 Abraham, "Justice as the Mark of Catholic Feminist Ecclesiology," 194.

taking over the priest's role of church leadership.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, here were the women, creating 'liturgy.' What is more, here were all the people filling the church!

Abraham dreams of a church, serving mission, one which is "a community characterized by egalitarian relationships in which the excluded and marginalized are brought into the circle of communal care."<sup>41</sup> I believe what the Wadeye women offer goes even further. It is not merely a matter of being 'brought into the circle,' but actually creating a new shape, a new paradigm for imaging church. Pope John Paul II envisioned in 1986 when he spoke to Aboriginal Australians, who today in turn, continue to challenge the church to attend to John Paul's warning, his prediction: "The Church in Australia will not be fully the Church Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others."<sup>42</sup> The Church needs to be wary and discerning in relation to adopting new forms of colonialism. Intervention, advocacy, proclamation - and mission—always need to be preceded and followed by listening.

A spirituality of mission and ministry in the workplace of our daily lives, which is being discussed here, calls for inclusive, just and relational responses, is grounded in hope and already sings with a grateful heart. It is communal.

Tyson Yunkaporta's amazing book *Sand Talk* reminds the reader of the communal nature of the creative process. He writes that while a person 'of high degree' may receive a song in a dream, it is by the work of the community, over time, that the song is:

taken up by the people and modified gradually through many iterations before it becomes part of the culture. Besides, that song can only be found through a ritual process developed over millennia by that community. The song itself is not as important as the communal knowledge process that produces it.<sup>43</sup>

Yunkaporta speaks about ways of knowing and doing things, remembering that Mama Doris knew it as Respect, Connect, Reflect, Direct. Mama told

40 The parish priest of Wadeye graciously accepted an invitation from the women to attend the Ritual on the first morning.

41 Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley, eds, *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 203, 205.

42 John Paul II, "Address to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders," *The Pope in Australia: Collected Homilies and Talks* (Homebush: St. Paul, 1986), 172, 166–172.

43 Tyson Yunkaporta, *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking can Save the World* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2019), 71.

Yunkaporta that she observed interventions and programs imposed on her community over the years which always operated in the reverse order. Government agents would often come to realize, after having had to take backwards steps, that the final step should have been the first.

This wisdom provides the maturation of workplace mission with a praxis. A church on mission can be either prophetic and provide some true leadership or else continue with traditional, patriarchal missionary styles and practices, replacing these under new names. Hospitality of the heart, shared participation and interdependence need to be intentionally incorporated into the expressions of missiology—in how both its theology and praxis are understood. A truly inclusive and respectful approach can not only be more effective but can more closely reflect attentiveness to the presence of a relational God and activity of the Holy Spirit.

#### 4 Revisiting Approaches and Practice for a Workplace Spirituality

To conclude: a brief glance at Mary, the Mother of Jesus, whose *fiat* was a total 'yes' to *mission Dei*, and 'yes' to the birthing into the world of the Divine Word: nurturing, proclaiming, pondering, guarding and guiding the mystery of her Son, Word Incarnate, then accompanying and holding that Word, literally, to Calvary and beyond. Such was Mary's work, and continuing on to post-resurrection, there at prayer alongside the disciples.

A further glance, across the hills to Ein Karim: Mary's faith again seen in action, as she carries the Word, and proclaims in her *Magnificat* song, the *missio Dei* to which she was totally aligned; and again at Cana, faith in action, encouraging her Son into *His* work.

Finally, it is I believe, primarily the marginalized themselves who are the ones re-arranging the table settings. In remembering that "the Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole Church's mission" (*Redemptoris Missio* no.28), the task, despite the setbacks, can and is being done with trust, enthusiasm and love. We see this in another woman of Jesus' times, Magdalene, first missionary of the Risen Christ. Her context was of an ages-long, religious and cultural mindset, which had kept women in their secondary and often invisible or oppressed place. At Jesus' words: "Go and tell my disciples!" (Matthew 28.10) she jumped with joy—and ran! The work of mission had and has not changed: *missio Dei*, God's longing to embrace the world, and Jesus' mission of proclaiming God's inclusive, liberating love. Learning especially from those on the margins and from the Indigenous peoples of our world, invites a response. Respectful, inclusive ways in which ministry is exercised and in which

leadership is shared, promises hope for a more integrated Christian life. This is an integral component of maturation of the transforming work conversation.

Let the words of Sherry Balcombe, leader of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Melbourne conclude this reflection:

It is the time of our generation to teach, to learn, to pass on the messages that are so sacred, so spiritual. These will bring a new awakening and gentleness to the Australian country and its people. It will cocoon you all in its strength and beauty, and you will wonder why it took you so long to embrace it ... Let's work together for a brighter future not only for Australia but for the world.<sup>44</sup>

### Acknowledgment

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# Conclusion: Shifts and Liminalities in Transforming Work

*Steve Taylor and Darren Cronshaw*

## 1 Weaving the Transforming of Work

Over recent decades, many helpful books have explored the future of the church. This volume addresses the nature and future of work and considers the implications of this for the mission of the church. Our stirring curiosity is not just about how church is changing but how society and the world of work is changing, and therefore what transforming of work and mission the church needs to adopt. In what ways can the church cooperate with *missio Dei* in a context of changing work patterns, leisure trends, technological advancements and artificial intelligence (AI)?

Our thinking emerged in dialogue with David Bosch's magnum opus, or *Summa Missiologica* as Lesslie Newbigin referred to it on its back cover. Part of the beauty of *Transforming Mission* as a title is its ambiguity, or its more appropriately labelled double meaning.<sup>1</sup> The title points toward the reality of and need for paradigm shifts in the theology of mission—that our perspectives on mission need transforming. The title also refers to the fruitful results of mission—that mission in itself is transforming. This transforming effect is not just for individuals but intended for neighbourhoods, cultures, societies and systems of justice. Mission is transforming for and by the work of the church and this includes ministry by the whole people of God, or in other words the 'apostolate of the laity' or 'priesthood of all believers'.<sup>2</sup> We believe Bosch's words about transforming vision for the addressing of ever more pressing issues are as timely today as when they written:

[T]he Christian church in general and the Christian mission in particular are today confronted with issues they have never even dreamt of and

1 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology). 20th Anniversary edition (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2011 [1991]).

2 "Apostolican Actuositatem" (1965), Art 2, in VC2, 768, 773–75; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 251 [251–252].



which are crying out for responses that are both relevant to the times and in harmony with the essence of the Christian faith.... The point I am making is simply that, quite literally, we live in a world fundamentally different ... The contemporary world challenges us to practice a “transformational hermeneutics” ... a theological response which transforms us first before we involve ourselves in mission to the world.<sup>3</sup>

The kind of transformational hermeneutic that Bosch calls for must be applied to witness in God's world beyond Sunday church. Bosch argued for mission as ministry by the whole people of God, shaped by a theology for the laity in their callings in the world. Given the “institutionalization of church offices,”<sup>4</sup> a transformation of imagination is required. We need transforming mission that addresses the changing world of work, transforming what mission means in these contexts. This volume has searched for signs of transformation through a focus on faith at work.

We defined transformation in relation to mission. God's triune participation in the world is transformative. Divine movements of creating, redeeming and sustaining invite the world to align with God's dream for peace and justice. We defined work as including all the activities of daily life. Work, whether paid or unpaid, is thus a central domain of the Church in the world.

Hence the transforming paradigm that this volume's contributors have sought to point to is that Jesus then also sends us into the world as transforming influences. Although the index of *Transforming Mission* does not include any entries for ‘work’, the chapters of this volume have assumed and developed the idea that mission ought to have a transforming influence on, in and through the world of work.

The laity do not exist just to serve the work of clergy, as if they are auxiliary to the real work of ministry and mission. Nor is empowering the laity merely about giving them opportunity to contribute to and lead worship life and other ministry elements of the church gathered. Bosch argued for “a more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God” that acknowledged the church scattered.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, ministry of the whole people of God is about how we foster God's purposes in the world, including in and through our work. Bosch argued that Jesus first called disciples not from a priestly class but from their work aims industries as diverse as fishing and tax-collecting.<sup>6</sup> The call to

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3 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 192, 193.

4 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

5 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

6 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 479.

“follow me” was a call to be salt and light. The call to go into all the world was a disciple-making, justice-righteousness-spreading invitation involving the whole people of God.<sup>7</sup> And Jesus continues to call followers from all walks of life.

We have developed this research trajectory using many of the sources so important to Bosch’s transforming project. These include Scripture, contextualized case studies from a range of social locations and historical surveys particularly of the recent history of faith and work. Together this has allowed examination of transforming work in missiological perspective.

## 2 A Grassrooted Frame of Work

How does God go about transforming the church for the urgent task of transforming work? This was a central question for the book. It was a decade after *Transforming Mission* was published that Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene wrote a summary of how the role of the laity has begun to be rediscovered, especially in the later half the 20th Century.<sup>8</sup> To order our investigation of how ministry by the whole people of God might embody God’s transforming mission, we drew on the frame suggested by Adler and Katoneene. Writing from an ecumenical perspective, Adler and Katoneene suggested that the resulting “re-defined ecclesiology” drew on new insights in four areas: the ministry of the laity, the church – gathered and scattered, the function of the ordained ministry, and Christ in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike both Bosch and Adler and Katoneene, our authors were more likely to search for the transforming of work as God’s action at the grassroots. Bosch identified six paradigms over the Church’s 2,000 years. In contrast, our authors read God’s mission in the dialogue with Chinese barbers and chefs (Yang), Vietnamese migrants (Do) and factory workers in Hong Kong (Wu), studied coffee shop church plants (Moon), chaplaincy (Pegram and Eichhorn) and youth work (Fagg).

Adler and Katoneene trace how the rediscovery of the laity was embodied in conferences, position statements, academies, lay centres and courses.

7 As Bosch makes clear, Jesus calls the disciples to the practice of *dikaioyne*, defined as faith in action, doing the will of God as it relates to both God and neighbour. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 71–76.

8 Elisabeth Adler and Jonah Katoneene. “Laity,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, edited by Nicholas Lossky (Geneva/ Grand Rapids: WCC/ Eerdmans, 2002), 658–64.

9 Adler and Katoneene, “Laity,” 663–64.

In contrast, our authors researched case studies of local churches (Taylor and Wright) seeking to empower the laity, analysed the dynamic growth of faith and work resourcing agencies (Barnes and Preece), clarified what type of theological education is needed to form the whole people of God for their callings (Martin), explored a constructive praxis that can transform entrepreneurs (Ward), and identified a wealth of grassroots experiences that help transform the church to transform the world of work (Bottomley).

We adopted Adler and Katoneene's four areas as sub-themes for the volume, adapted them for each section, and collated our grassroots contributions in conversation with these sub-themes and with each other. Firstly, we chose to begin with ordering "Christ in the world," in order to centre mission in the sending activity of God and work as a participation in the *missio Dei*. Secondly, we explored "Church in the world" acknowledging Adler and Katoneene's second category, but wanting to shift away from the dualisms that can creep into church gathered and scattered and the resulting temptation to map the ministry of the ordained onto church gathered and the ministry of the whole people of God onto church scattered. Thirdly, we clustered a set of chapters centrally around the ministry of the laity, and unlike Bosch prioritised laity before ordained ministry. Fourthly, a cluster of chapters engaged with ordained ministry, in ways that questioned and reframed traditional uses. Fifthly, we added a further sub-theme, that of maturation, to cluster missiological thinking about the future of work and leisure and to underline the value of voices, including women and indigenous, to which the church at the grassroots in the world needs to pay attention. Over 20 chapters, we outlined that work is transforming – so transforming that it transforms theologies of God (sub theme 1), theologies of church (sub theme 2), theologies of ministry (lay in sub theme 3 and ordained in sub theme 4); and theologies of maturation (sub theme 5).

### 3 Kaleidoscope of Themes and Chapters

#### 3.1 *A Frame of Work Transformed – Christ in the World*

In exploring Christ in the world, contributors used theological methodologies and lived experiences quite different from those present in *Transforming Mission* and *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. It was in order to grasp the richness of God's action in the transforming of work that we challenged and adapted the order of Adler and Katoneene's theological framework. We assumed the transforming of work needs to begin not with ministry of the laity but with Christ in the world.

Xiaoli Yang reflected on the remarkable work of laity in the Chinese Church including narratives and mission practices at workplaces. She discerned a trajectory of grassroots missiology borne out of everyday lived experiences that is inculturational, Christophanic and relational. We are convinced that transforming of work cannot be separated from being the church. We want to learn from the reality of life and mission in churches of non-Western contexts and be challenged by their vibrant faith. *Missio Dei* begins with God's work in the world and the lived and sensuous theologies described by Yang. Dishes like three versions of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish' (*Wubin Eryu*, 五饼二鱼), and the citizen sacrifice's sketched by Wu and Do in the following chapters, reorder the imagination of the church in the world.

Sarah Do discussed 'work' in Philippians in light of Vietnamese migrant experience, not least their 'faithfulness' for the church and the gospel. Her careful reading of Philippians illuminates a transforming theology of work in the context of migrant experience and across generations.

Following the trajectories of *Transforming Mission*, we wanted the volume to engage deeply with Scripture and in particular Biblical resources for workplace theology and witness. Yang, Do and Wu provide close readings of biblical texts, attentive to social location, which frame transforming of work in Christological and missiological ways. As with Bosch, they pointed us to the priority of Scripture in the transforming of mission in the transforming of work.

Siu Fung Wu integrated faith and work(s) for the transformation of humanity and the renewal of the entire creation through a reading of Paul in Galatians and Romans. Wu engaged with Bosch, but also with Jayakumar Christian and Melba Padilla Maggay, to show how work is vital for the poor for their dignity and wellbeing. Transforming mission is not just about transforming communities—rather than individuals—but also communities of the people of God working together to transform their world and overcome poverty. In this point, Wu echoed the *Lumen Gentium* understanding of the "apostolate of the laity" which makes the "Church present and fruitful" as "the salt of the earth" and "the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the church".<sup>10</sup>

Dave Benson and Darren Cronshaw suggest that as the social services sector becomes increasingly deregulated and competitive, Christian faith-based organizations and workers can conceptualize their work as a competitive striving together for shalom. Working from a concrete (Western) context, they offer a re-ordering of Christ in the world which happens because the church is transformed, from a posture of *ecclesia docens* (teaching church) to *ecclesia*

10 Excerpts from "Lumen Gentium" (1964), Art. 12, 33 in VC2, 363, 390–91; in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 250.

*discens* (a listening church).<sup>11</sup> Their chapter offers new possibilities for faith-based services. We need transformed thinking and praxis applied to these and other diverse kinds of faith and work integration in so-called secular marketplace and social service contexts.

### 3.2 *Moving beyond Dualism – Church in the World*

Our second sub-theme was Church in the world. Throughout this volume we sought to move beyond any dualism of identifying lay ministry with the church scattered and ordained ministry with the church gathered. The mission of the whole church is in the world.

Gordon Preece provided a historical perspective of how the Lausanne movement navigated the integration of evangelism with social action and Creation care, illuminated principally in dialogue with the work of David Bosch. Preece investigated recent history and demonstrated how dialogue about a credal, economic trinitarian framework of God's work, and the Lausanne commissions flowing from it, echoed and helped resolve for workplace ministry some earlier tensions regarding evangelism and social concern. Preece outlined how John Stott and David Bosch, in their distinct ways, offered the church an integral mission in the world that by extension provided a missional theology of work and valued the '9 to 5 window' and the church present in the secular and public arenas of life and livelihood. It is helpful to learn from those who have been transforming work so that future initiatives can build further in new directions.

The next three chapters offered reflections on mission as work, located in lived experiences in urban contexts across the globe. Essential to this volume's methodology was a commitment to engage with Bosch not only through *Transforming Mission* but also by reading global voices. This occurred through the rich resource of *Readings in World Mission*, with its excerpts on the ministry of the whole people of God providing ways for global voices to resource our conversations. It was intriguing to us that a number of contributors in *Readings in World Mission* pointed to case studies of lived ecclesial practice as exemplars of transforming work. Specifically, Virginia Fabella encouraged base ecclesial communities as a "locus of new and creative ministries for both men and women in the church today".<sup>12</sup> Leonardo Boff offered base ecclesial

11 As expanded in Steve Taylor, "Worship, Work and Witness: Action Research in a Local Church," in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

12 Virginia Fabella, "Mission of Women in the Church in Asia: Role and Position," in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, edited by

communities as locations of “new ecclesiological experience”.<sup>13</sup> John de Gruchy pointed to the charismatic movement as a grassroots revitalizing movement.<sup>14</sup> These invited examination of contemporary case studies of lived ecclesial practice, in dialogue with Bosch’s missiology of work. Hence several case studies of lived ecclesial practice from around the world demonstrated ways that transforming work cannot be separated from being the church.

Jay Moon explained the approach of Entrepreneurial Church Planting that potentially reduces the gap between the clergy/laity and the church/world by using business initiatives to connect with those in the marketplace unreached with the gospel.

Steve Taylor discussed the practices he used in Opawa Baptist Church in New Zealand to encourage learning about the transforming of work: workplace pastoral prayers, ‘spirituality-to-go’ weekday prayer resources, and God@work discernment groups.

Nigel Wright examined his local congregational level experience of the Church of England’s national Renewal and Reform Program which aimed at “Setting God’s People free” and equipping lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life.

These chapters thus pointed to new possibilities of seeing the Church in the world – in renewed partnerships for faith and work organisations (Preece), new locations for ecclesial life (Moon) and transformed spiritual practices to resource faith and work (Taylor and Wright).

### 3.3 *Serving the Baptised Who Serve Their World – Ministry of the Laity*

Our third sub-theme was ministry of the laity. Four chapters provide contemporary overviews of developments in transforming work and theological reflection on formation of workplace Christians in particular vocations.

Kenneth Barnes appealed to pastors and congregations to embrace the challenge of integrating faith, work and economics. He collated several contemporary exemplars of churches, theological colleges and networks that work to overcome the ‘Sunday/Monday divide’. These included Redeemer Presbyterian

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John S. Pobee and Barbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 82–84, 89; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 257 [256–58].

13 Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiological: The Base Communities Reinvent the church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 32–33; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 258 [258–59].

14 John de Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis: A South African Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 25–30–76; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 259–60.

Church in New York, Ridley College in Melbourne, the Mockler Centre at Gordon-Conwell, and the Made to Flourish and Oikonomia Networks. As these organisations offer resources, coaching and encouragement, they embody Christ's Great Commission promise of Christian presence.

Andrew Sloane defended the notion of 'profession' as a missional vocation and as essentially a moral enterprise. He uses the contemporary practice of medicine in particular, to re-examine the place of professions in light of an "apostolate of the laity." He advocates for churches to help form and sustain vocational professionals, focusing on the demands and needs of doctors as a test case.

Kara Martin applied an innovative empirical analysis of what characteristics need to be formed in Christian doctors and teachers. She offered a framework for spiritual formation of laity with key cognitive, behavioural and affective constructs; not just 'why' but 'how' with spiritual disciplines, servant leadership skills and collegial relationship building. This is a model for how theological education might be reimagined and reshaped to form different workers in their callings, just as Ward elsewhere offered a constructive Christian praxis for transforming entrepreneurship.

Dave Fagg researched Christians working as youth workers in secular workplaces and how they express their faith in ways that include their disclosing of faith, representing the wider church, living ethical and collegial practices, praying at work and conversing about faith.

Hence the ministry of the laity is prioritised, with the church serving the baptised as they follow Christ in their vocations. These chapters offered a compelling vision. To slightly paraphrase Sloane: God's mission, and that of the Church that bears it, needs the professions: the professions need God's mission and the Church that is its product and bearer.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.4 *Towards Grassroots Refocusing of Ordained Ministry*

The fourth sub-theme was ordained ministry, particularly in function and orientation.

Our volume departs significantly from Bosch in how we clarify the ordained ministry. Much of Bosch's focus is on the negative impact of ordained ministry. This results in the irony of a significant focus on the ordained in an emerging element titled "mission as ministry by the whole people of God."<sup>16</sup> We sought

15 Andrew Sloane, "More Than Technique: The Professions As Missional Vocations" in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

16 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478–85.



a constructive approach, grouping together a number of chapters in order to parse the function of the ordained. These four chapters do not claim to offer a theology of ordination. Rather they interrogate the nature and function of ordained ministry, in light of how Christ is at work in Union offices and among entrepreneurs and chaplaincy ministry. This opens some fascinating insights for the book's themes.

The challenge of a grassrooted starting point for transforming work is clearly articulated by John Bottomley. While Adler and Katoneene suggest the possibility of a "systematic ecumenical theology on the laity",<sup>17</sup> Bottomley asks fundamental questions about words like "systematic," "ecumenical," and "theology." His experience as pastor turned union researcher, and his learning from indigenous spirituality, shapes his strong critique of Bosch's frameworks.<sup>18</sup> Bottomley, like Reynolds later in this volume, reminded us of the need to consider what voices we listen to, and prioritize learning from the whole people of God including laity, women and indigenous people. His work demonstrates the generative potential of a "more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God".<sup>19</sup> Bottomley draws on life experience in responding to the question of how God might transform the church for the urgent task of transforming work. Grassroots experiences – of prayer in a suburban home, shared lunch in a Union office, learning from indigenous wisdom and the vulnerability of open-heart surgery – become God's call to a new vocation and identity in the world of work. For Bottomley, a theology of transforming is focused best in the midst of the world of work, not the world of the church. Missiologies of work can emerge from experiences of God's judgement on the captivity of the church.

Other chapters in the ordained section provide ways to examine ordained ministry through broader frameworks. Bishop Lawrence Ward reflected on his co-teaching of Gordon-Conwell's Entrepreneurship in Church and Community course which was developed as a mechanism for urban development, entrepreneurship coaching and job creation. Ward's action research showed how the church can support the ministry of the laity by teaching on entrepreneurship in contexts of urban deprivation. Vocational dreams – like being a hairdresser – are realised as theologies of work are integrated with practices of

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17 Adler and Katoneene, 663.

18 Others have suggested Bosch is a prisoner of his whiteness; e.g., Thinandavha Derrick Mashau, "A Prisoner of His Own Creative Imagination: A Decolonial Discourse with David Bosch's Missional View of a Church as an Alternative Community," *Ecclesial Futures* 1(2) (2020): 34 [33–52].

19 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.



new business development. The classroom was in a seminary, but Ward points beyond theory to praxis in how students exercised the transforming of work and bridged the Sunday and Monday divide in deprived urban communities. Ward's teaching and the students' embodied assessment was consistent with the call for grassroots lived examples in the *Readings in World Mission*. Moreover, the future of faith and work needs more of these kinds of fresh and innovative thinking about and partnerships between churches, seminaries, and businesses.

Another two chapters, both set in Western Australia, researched developments in fields of chaplaincy. These open up different trajectories for thinking about the nature of ordained ministry, not as clericalized, but as a guild of skilled practitioners, formed around the servant ministry of Christ with a call for skills and training to be the church in those non-professional capacities.

Nigel Pegram investigated models of grassroots hospital chaplaincy that included nonreligious professionals as the people of God mediating the presence of God in situations of suffering and need. Pegram's typology is instructive as it unpicks ordination. His work unbundles training, standards, validation and life-long learning. The church has historically woven these elements together. Yet each is needed for transforming ministry and invites a reimagining of ordination.

Garth Eichhorn similarly discussed the role of non-professional 'street chaplains' taking care and concern into night entertainment precincts. He argues that voluntarism is a grace of ministry uniquely available to the whole people of God. Both of these chaplaincy cases are exemplars of what ordained ministry ideally does: building the church as a people who can build the church in the world. The church is ordained to enable the priesthood of all believers.

These eight chapters on ministry of the laity and how the ordained might serve the whole people of God can be read as contemporary engagements with various threads visible in *Readings in World Mission*. From India, M. M. Thomas appealed after World War II for a radical laicism, asserting that "Christian religion ... and the Church consists *primarily* of [laypersons] doing their secular jobs and witnessing to the true life of the secular 'hid with Christ in God'".<sup>20</sup> The secular-spiritual divide can overpower the imagination of Christians and keep us thinking that the main way of expressing faith is in so-called 'spiritual' spheres. But the spiritual reign of God invades all spheres of society, and

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20 M. M. Thomas, "An Irrelevant Profession," *Student World* 43 (1950), 319–321; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 245 [244–246].

Thomas helpfully suggests that all so-called secular activity is part of God's interest.

Also from India, Rajaiah Paul articulated how the witness of laypeople in their secular occupations is how the church can be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world". He argued that the laity do not exist to relieve ordained ministers of ministry within the church, but to work in their secular callings in order to foster the rule of God in God's world. For Paul, the message of the Gospel can be most effectively spread "by Christians who have been placed by God within those very systems and who have been called by Him to exercise their Christian ministry as the *laos* in their own secular situations".<sup>21</sup> The church and the world need the people of God to minister throughout the width and depth of so-called secular life. This is why theological and missiological reflection such as gathered in this volume is so important—and why we as editors were pleased to learn from contributions from those interested in teaching, medicine, chaplaincy and entrepreneurship but also welfare, economics and AI in other sections. A critical area of further research is theological foundations and development of resources for Christian workers across a range of professional and other vocational spheres.

The writers who reflected on the challenges and opportunities of street chaplains, youth workers, social workers and doctors, resonated with M. M. Thomas' concept of Christians standing together with the world in sin and judgment. This is a missiology of solidarity in which the day-to-day decisions of laypeople offer possibilities for redemption, or as Thomas quotes J. H. Oldham "a new dimension of reality permeating these realms".<sup>22</sup> Thomas provided an idealist vision for transforming work, but Pegram, Fagg, Benson and Cronshaw, and Sloane provide realist descriptions of the complexity of "the vision we have to recapture about the Church in the world today."<sup>23</sup> Further examination of how missiology might be outworked in other secular workplaces could be very fruitful for evaluating what is best practice of witness in secular contexts.

### 3.5 *A Maturing Frame of Work*

We reordered the frame provided by Adler and Katoneene, in order to locate a missiology of work in the grassroots and transforming actions of God, which

21 Rajaiah D. Paul, "Towards a New Strategy in Asia: The Layman as the Spearhead of the Christian Enterprise," *Student World* 49 (1956), 217–73, 275–76; excerpt from *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 247 [246–48].

22 Thomas, "An Irrelevant Profession," in Thomas ed. *Readings in World Mission*, 245.

23 Thomas, "An Irrelevant Profession," in Thomas ed. *Readings in World Mission*, 246.

requires a listening church, a missionally formed laity and reimagining of ordination. We also added maturation as an expansion of Adler and Katoneene's four areas. The final added sub-theme of maturation drew together chapters that consider the future of work.

Theologically, maturation is what results from transformation. God's mission of creating, redeeming and sustaining results in the making new of all things. Four chapters develop this area of maturation. Each provide ways to develop Bosch's missiological proposals and extend Adler and Katoneene's incipient ministry of the laity.

Turning again to *Readings in World Mission*, these insights into formation resonate for us with Moltmann's call for Christian theology to be "more and more a practical and political theology".<sup>24</sup> Moltmann celebrates theology taught in ways that remove distinctions between clergy and laity. He calls for a theology that does not train lay people as 'mini-pastors' but instead trains them to "think independently and act in a Christian way in their own vocations in the world".<sup>25</sup> Forty-five years ago he appealed:

Christian theology will in the future become more and more a practical and political theology. It will no longer be simply a theology for priests and pastors, but also a theology for the laity in their callings in the world. It will be directed not only toward divine service in the church, but also toward divine service in the everyday life of the world. Its practical implementation will include preaching and worship, pastoral duties, and Christian community, but also socialization, democratization, education toward self-reliance and political life.<sup>26</sup>

So where might 'transforming' of work lead? Bosch was prophetic in 1991 suggesting that church and mission are "confronted with issues they have never even dreamt of" which demand responses "relevant to the times and in harmony with the essence of the Christian faith".<sup>27</sup> The pace of change and extent of disruption today make Bosch's prophetic words even more urgent. We read Bosch and his conversation partners 30 years on. Today, to borrow from Bosch's

24 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 11–12; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 253 [252–54].

25 Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, 253 [252–54].

26 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 11–12; excerpt in *Readings in World Mission*, edited by Norman Thomas (London: SPCK, 1995), 253 [252–54].

27 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 192.

phrasing “quite literally, we live in a world fundamentally different”.<sup>28</sup> We echo Bevans and Schroeder’s challenge that just as our theology needs to be done *after* Aquinas, so our missiology needs to be done *after* Bosch.<sup>29</sup> Our world is post-apartheid, post-Berlin Wall, post-9/11, emerging into post-COVID and potentially transforming into a post-work world.

Mark Penn contends that future trends of work, business, politics and culture are not shaped by society’s broad forces but by quiet changes in small population groups. A decade ago, his *Microtrends* identified a number of counterintuitive trends that have now come to fruition, including internet dating and increasing consumer choice.<sup>30</sup> More recently, in *Microtrends Squared*, Penn identified fifty new microtrends and the shifts he suggests they will pre-empt.<sup>31</sup> In the midst of the chaos of changes in society, he argues there are clear trends that we can identify and adapt to. The information age is giving way to the ‘disinformation age’ as online influencers overshadow traditional news-media. People are marrying (or not) with different approaches to commitment and tolerance, but with an overall trend of fewer marriages, fewer children and increased loneliness. Younger and older generations are experiencing newfound freedom of choice and experimenting with different ways of balancing life and work with study or retirement. Businesses and politicians eagerly observe these trends to learn how they can better make money or win elections.<sup>32</sup>

The church needs to pay attention to these trends. One reason is that one of the trends is indifference to religion, as Penn observes that “many millennials have put religion on hold and instead are filling their lives with more technology, more hookups, and more companions”.<sup>33</sup> Another overriding imperative to pay attention to the changing world comes from a concern for justice and ethics. Globalization and technological changes are raising all sorts of ethical challenges, including issues around fair work, data collection, news distribution, democracy and AI. Penn warns about the dangers of the forces and counterforces of emerging technologies. In the church, for the sake of the world, we

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28 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 193.

29 Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, “Missiology after Bosch: Reverencing a Classic by Moving Beyond,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 29(2) (April 2005): 69, 72.

30 Mark Penn with E Kinney Zalesne, *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* (New York: Twelve Books 2009)

31 Mark Penn with Meredith Fineman, *Microtrends Squared: The New Small Forces Driving Today's Big Disruptions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).

32 Penn, *Microtrends Squared*, 5, 29, 199.

33 Penn, *Microtrends Squared*, 13.

need the best of our prayerful intellects and the deepest of our compassionate hearts in response. As editors of this volume, we are inspired and partly motivated by the leaders of the tribe of Issachar who “understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take” (1 Chronicles 12.32b, NLT). What are “the signs of the times” for the contemporary and future world of work, and how do we discern “the best course ... to take”?

As well as general societal and relational trends, Penn identifies at least a dozen microtrends that are transforming technology, work and business. The gig economy is taking over a variety of sectors and creating new work opportunities. Automation is threatening many jobs but creating others. Smartphones, drones, translation software, digital clothes sizing, self-monitoring health data, robotics, AI, driverless cars and social media are some of the technological advancements that are transforming society and the workplace.<sup>34</sup> Authors in this volume addressed implications for some of these trends, but we acknowledge the need for more research and reflective practice. While this conclusion offers some summary of theological perspectives on the trends driving today’s disruptions, we also urgently call for more work to be done.

Given the priority of Christ in the world, we want to locate reflection on the future of work with a theological register. Gordon Preece argued for a trinitarian framework of three Great Commissions and a church mature enough to embody the Great Commission (of the Son), the Great Commandment (of the Spirit) and the Creation Commission (of the Creator). While his earlier chapter drew on Bosch in dialogue with the history of faith and work movements between 1974 to 2004, this follow-up chapter focused on Newbigin and drew out a trinitarian and creation-based theology which is argued to bridge Missional Church and Workplace Networks as well as Ecumenical and Evangelical approaches. Preece locates his argument in the unfolding histories of the Lausanne Workplace Network and Cape Town Commitment and influential groups such as Regent College Marketplace, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, the Theology of Work Project, and Made to Flourish Network. These are the groups to watch and build on in transforming work and mission.

Two of the final chapters of the volume address specific dimensions of the trends identified by Penn. Victoria Lorrimer explored changing dynamics of work in an increasingly technological world with developments in Genetic, Robotic, Information and Nanotechnologies (GRIN). She asked what principles can guide us, how optimistic or concerned should we be about technology’s role, and what are implications for global injustices and human flourishing?

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34 Penn, *Microtrends Squared*, 134, 145, 156, 178, 322, 324, 340–341, 346–55.

Lorrimar artfully maintained that mission as Bosch conceived it and Christian vocation remain, but our understandings need expanding to account for a changing world of work. One of her most significant arguments is that considering technologies reshaping human existence, the language of co-creation has more transforming potential than *missio Dei*.

Brian Harris and Jon Bergmann argued that mission must not only include crossing technological boundaries but must equally explore a theology of transforming work in a world where AI may reshape or even do away with work for many. A resulting pressing need is for a theology not of work but of leisure. In their words, “This is a volume exploring the missiology of work just as futurists such as Harari are suggesting that in the relatively near future there might be no workplace to transform, or if there is, the workplace will be a significantly shrunken version of what currently exists.”<sup>35</sup> The transforming work project may inevitably broaden to embrace a transformation of vocations in an increasingly post-work world. Harris and Bergman invite us to articulate life to the full as a transforming not just of work but of leisure.

Robyn Reynolds provided an artful and prophetic ending by calling for the maturity of a church formed by all the voices of the people of God, including particularly indigenous and female. Reynolds urged repentance from sexism that preferences white male voices and appealed for an attending to art and ritual alongside books and talking. She offered a beautiful reflection on what she has learned, and what we can all learn, from women and especially indigenous women regarding transforming all of life in mission. Thus, rather than beginning with indigenous voices, our call for transforming of work concluded with Reynold’s commentary on this creative ritual making of the Wadeye women of Australia.

Together these four chapters offer a glimpse of what maturation in the transforming of work might look like: theologically orientated, seeking co-creative partners, providing Christian witness amid leisure and learning from indigenous and women’s voices.

#### 4 A Missiology after Bosch

All twenty of the chapter contributions use Bosch in some way. For most, he is a jumping off point, his focus on *missio Dei* a significant missiological resource.

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35 Brian Harris and Jon Bergmann, “Beyond Boredom: Being Human in a Post-Work World” in *Transforming Work: Missiological Perspectives for the Church in the World*, edited by Darren Cronshaw, Steve Taylor and Marguerite Kappelhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2024)

For a few, his work is an opportunity for respectful interrogation, for example Do at the beginning of the volume with Bosch's use of Philippians, and Reynolds at the end commenting on the intersectionality. Thirty years on, Bosch's missiology remains a vital and generative force in global missiology, including in the transforming of work.

Eight (of the twenty) chapters use Bosch and in addition use one or more excerpts from *Readings in World Mission* edited by Thomas. Kraemer is a resource for Preece, Wright and Eichhorn. The documents around Vatican 2 enrich the thinking of Wright and Sloane. Moltmann informs the thinking of Moon and Martin. Fabella is used by Sloane regarding power, and Thomas by Fagg. For Taylor, the readings are located as resourcing a particular approach to work.

Further research might want to engage with the global voices not directly drawn on in this volume. How can we understand the missionary identity (as explored by Niles) in an AI world? How do we understand the ecclesial implications and koinonia (as discussed by Behr-Sigel) in a digital world? How are smart phone technologies reframing, in ways helpful and unhelpful, the 'charism of the priesthood' (Behr-Sigel)? These gaps in our work are perhaps a liminal space in which future research might dwell.

Bosch wrote that that the world he and his contemporaries lived in was fundamentally changing and called for the practice of "transformational hermeneutics".<sup>36</sup> He was appealing for attentiveness to how the people of God need to be transformed and then involve themselves with God in mission to the world.

For three reasons we drew on the work of David Bosch in order to offer a coherent missiological thread to our conversations. Firstly, it was thirty years since the publication of *Transforming Mission* and the anniversary seemed an opportune time to invite conversation about place the reality of faith and work in the early 2020s alongside Bosch's insights. Second, the companion readings of Norman Thomas invited us to pay attention to the global and ecumenical church. Third, Bosch himself saw "Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God" as central to the relevancy of an emerging mission.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, we now argue for a fourth reason as to why the language of "transforming" contributes to a missiology of work. This revolves around the possibility, raised by a number of the contributors to this book, of liminality as space for generative formation. Yang pointed to the dynamic of grassroots missiology in ways that affirm learnings amid the liminal. Taylor's realizations

36 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 193.

37 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478–485.



regarding *ecclesia discens* rather than *ecclesia docens* (the learning church rather than the teaching church), provided a spirituality by which discipleship can attend to dynamic and shifting contexts. Wright, working after Hendrik Kraemer, suggested that what is needed is not so much a centralized and written ‘theology of the laity’ but a ‘theology by the laity.’ These trajectories encourage the people of God to develop their own theological practices and to recognize the Holy Spirit as a gift from God who empowers them to serve and witness to the world; that is in whatever liminal spaces they find themselves. The conversions that Bottomley described are in fact transformations in moments of liminality. Ward explored the overlap of the liminal spheres of seminary, businesses and communities, out of which emerges innovative and generative projects for *missio Dei*. Pegram demonstrated how diverse approaches to chaplaincy invite rethinking of formation and accreditation. Eichhorn celebrated the boundary-breaking work of the Spirit as volunteer street chaplains serve in what could be conceptualized as liminal places of play. Lorrimar caused us to contemplate the liminality on the borders of emerging Genetic, Robotic, Information and Nanotechnologies (GRIN). Reynolds invited us to consider the contributions of ritual and theology from Indigenous and female voices, who are often speaking from a position of liminality on the margins of white, male, Western culture. Together our writers offer a sustained challenge to Bosch’s use of paradigms. What if missiology is at its most vigorous and transformative not in paradigms, but in the shifts?

## 5 Paradigms, Shifts and Liminalities in Transforming Mission

For here we discover a profound reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means.<sup>38</sup>

The subtitle of *Transforming Mission* is *Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. In a hinge chapter, Bosch made paradigms an essential epistemology.<sup>39</sup> Paradigms shaped how he read time and theorized mission. Applying Kuhn’s paradigms allowed Bosch to theorize faith as being transformed, becoming in mission “profoundly different from any of its predecessors”.<sup>40</sup> His motivation is curiosity “to explore its relevance for the present ... to be challenged by the

38 Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium, Apostolic Exhortation* (London: St Paul’s, 2013), 9–10.

39 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 185–194.

40 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 187.



‘self-definitions’” of the past.<sup>41</sup> This involves struggle, as “defenders of the old order and champions of the new frequently argue at cross purposes”.<sup>42</sup> Amid this focus on “paradigms,” Bosch gave less attention to the nature of “shifts”.

What happens when we focus, as Bosch did on paradigms, rather than shifts? First, Bosch notes that old paradigms live on. But as Bottomley and Reynolds, two of our contributors warn, do we want the ‘old paradigm’ of modernity, including sexism and racism, to live on? The wounds of history require repentance, rather than a search for the “emergence of a postmodern paradigm.” Second, paradigms suggest long settled periods of shared social imaginaries. Yet culturally we live in times of massive disruption. As Penn argues, shifts in work, business, politics and culture are likely to accelerate. Rather than contemplate the possibility of overarching and long settled patterns of shared social behaviour, we need a transforming missiology attentive to shifts, focused not on universal paradigms but alert to the *missio Dei* in specific places and people? Third, we note Mark Penn’s argument that future trends of work, business, politics and culture are not shaped by society’s broad forces but by quiet changes in small population groups.<sup>43</sup> Yang and Wood become exemplars by drawing on entrepreneurial activism in local communities to show the generative potential of local grassroots praxis for transforming work. Do and Wu, both deeply immersed in shifts caused by migration, engage Scripture, providing more gritty, contextual readings, emerging from small population groups. This suggests that conversations about the shifts produced by small knots of local activism are more helpful than discussion of the big sweeps inherent in paradigm visions. A valorizing of paradigms, and a lack of attention to shifts has consequences.

These factors disturb Bosch’s notions of overarching paradigms and makes problematic broad global shifts, or paradigms, in theorizing mission. How might a focus, instead, on ‘shifts’ invite transformation in mission? One way to appreciate the revitalizing possibilities of shifts as transforming is through the concept of liminality. Liminality is derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “a threshold”. Anthropologist, Victor Turner applied it to the sense of disorientation that occurs in a time of transition.<sup>44</sup> More recently, usage of the term has broadened to describe cultural change. This is especially helpful in our era of massive cultural transitions and cultural and societal changes after 9/11 and COVID-19.

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41 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 187.

42 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 189.

43 Penn, *Microtrends Squared*.

44 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

The implications for missiology, and in particular the transforming of work, are developed in *Crossing Thresholds: A Practical Theology of Liminality*.<sup>45</sup> Carson, Fairhurst, Rooms, and Withrow encourage the church to intentionally locate itself in dialogic relationships with the working world, inviting people into the liminal spaces that occur in the shifts between the spiritual and working life. The liminal is presented as a learning space in which change occurs, while liminality is a threshold to cross as past assumptions and practices are called into question. Carson et. al. ground this theologically: "In Christian terms, learning takes the form of *discipleship*, taken from our understanding of the roles the disciples played in Jesus' time".<sup>46</sup> Hence liminality is transforming. Shifts, including those around transforming, can ground us as learners, being transformed in the way of Jesus.

Carson et. al. draw on Bruce Reed's work in *The Dynamics of Religion*. Reed was concerned with what happens when his religious research subjects (English Anglican Christians) move between faith and life.<sup>47</sup> Unlike Victor Turner, who explored liminality as once-in-a-lifetime rites of passage, Reed examined liminality in the everyday. This resonates with some of our concerns about the use of paradigms, that value overarching patterns of behaviour, and obscure the shifts that constantly occur in specific places and people.

The words "process and movement" are key foundations of Reed's thinking. Faith and work are not polarities. Instead, they are two poles. The intentional desire to oscillate (or shift) between faith and work, learning from (being transformed by) creates space for managing the dilemmas in life.<sup>48</sup> The challenge is to remain within liminality, to value the shifts, by suspending "either/or, with intent to experience them both very close to the same time as 'and'."<sup>49</sup> Paying attention to middle spaces, or liminal spaces, invites transformation. Reed outlines how this might apply not only to individuals, but to groups. Hence, the church, as a community of disciples, is framed as a learning organization,<sup>50</sup> holding space and inviting the exploring of possibilities and expanding of worldviews.

Returning to Bosch then, it is not paradigms that transform, whether it be cultures or worldviews, organizations or people. Rather, transformation

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45 Timothy Carson, Rosy Fairhurst, Nigel Rooms and Lisa Withrow, *Crossing Thresholds: A Practical Theology of Liminality* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth: 2018).

46 Carson et. al., *Crossing Thresholds*, 142.

47 Bruce D Reed, *The Dynamics of Religion: Process and Movement in Christian Churches* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978).

48 Carson et. al., *Crossing Thresholds*, 199.

49 Carson et. al., *Crossing Thresholds*, 199.

50 Carson et. al., *Crossing Thresholds*, 153–58.

happens as we value the disturbances inherent in shifts, micro and macro. Liminality produces transformation, including in mission.

As already noted, liminality has been used in theological reflection. In *Crossing Thresholds*, God is argued to be a boundary crosser into the liminality of creation.<sup>51</sup> In *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology*, Sang Hyun Lee considers the Holy Spirit as “the eternal communion of love that emerged out of the liminality between the Father and the Son within the Trinity”. Jesus’ liminality and marginalization here on earth is an actualization of liminality in the Triune life of God.<sup>52</sup> Lee distinguishes between “objective liminality” and “subjective liminality”.<sup>53</sup> Galileans were objectively liminal, due to external factors including geographical location, political predicament and socioeconomic status. Hence in the Incarnation, Jesus was born in “objective liminality”. Yet transformationally in the Gospels, Jesus acts in ways that are subjectively liminal. These include leaving home, engaging the marginalized and calling disciples from all walks of life. Lee describes how this choice to enter “subjective liminality” by Jesus has significance, particularly for Asian Americans.

Lee proposed that Christian discipleship is thus a transforming participation in this divine liminality:

To be liminal is to be out of the structure in which a person usually functions, and, therefore, to be freed at least temporarily from what governs a person’s thought and action. To be liminal is to be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things either individually or as a society. It is to be more ready than usual to consider new and different possibilities.<sup>54</sup>

This allows a God-centered openness to the will of God, discerned in the particularity of the inbreaking of God. Lee argues this gives content to the transforming possibilities of liminality. The result is “the courage to face the bewildering space of liminality and to do the work of constructing a hybrid identity without relying upon the false security of an essentialized finite principle.”<sup>55</sup> Lee

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51 For Carson et. al., *Crossing Thresholds*, God’s first movement is a missionary movement of crossing the boundary of God’s own self in creation. God’s second movement occurs in redemption, in the Son’s kenotic act of leaving the heavens for his dwelling on the earth. Carson et. al., 102.

52 Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis, MS: Fortress Press, 2010), 68, 54–61.

53 Lee, *From a Liminal Place*, 63–68.

54 Lee, *From a Liminal Place*, 68.

55 Lee, *From a Liminal Place*, 117.

applied this to migrant identities. We argue that in addition this attentiveness to liminality applies to the transforming of work, as people are encouraged to look at the everyday challenges and possibilities of work as a source of new ideas and possibilities. The liminal is not exotic and over there, it is here and now. Every moment invites transformation. It is in the shifts, rather than the paradigms, that transformation is fully realized.

Missiology offers a history, theology and spirituality of uniquely inhabiting the shifts in all of life. The result is “a way of sense-making in the whole of our lives.”<sup>56</sup> This is a continuous present experience, made possible through the dynamic exchange that is the movement between faith and work, work and faith. A theology of *missio Dei* recognizes God’s activity in daily life, in the liminality that is all of life.

To value the shifts as transforming suggests missiology can transform a theology of work. Equally, a theology of work can inform – transform even – missiology. This is suggested to some extent in the Entrepreneurial Church Planting described by Moon. It is certainly evident in the chapters by Yang and Ward, as entrepreneurial practices—the barber shop in China, the missional kitchen in Hong Kong, the new businesses in deprived areas of Boston – inform their grassroots missiology. As the whole people of God embrace the liminal and witness in whatever shifting spaces they find themselves, they “give life to others” and experience “what mission means.”<sup>57</sup> These businesses invite transforming shifts, for customers, for owners and for understandings of mission.

Our authors are hopeful. Work can be transformed. Transformation comes as the whole of life work of the whole people of God is understood as the arena in which God’s love and grace, mercy and judgement. God’s Divine activity, embodied through the whole of life witness of the whole people of God, transforms the church as it serves the ministry of the laity. This whole of life workplace witness thus orders the ordained, who serve a “more organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God.”<sup>58</sup>

Working with work after Bosch, we argue for a renewed focus on the transforming potential of shifts. Attending to the shifts is essential to being a disciple of Jesus. We are invited to a life of receptiveness, responsiveness and flexibility. We draw on the guidance of the Spirit and the companionship and model of Jesus. Such is the invitation offered by missiological perspectives to the transforming of work.

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<sup>56</sup> Carson et. al., *Crossing Thresholds*, 222.

<sup>57</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 485.

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